Tikkun

POLITICS + CULTURE + TRANSFORMATION

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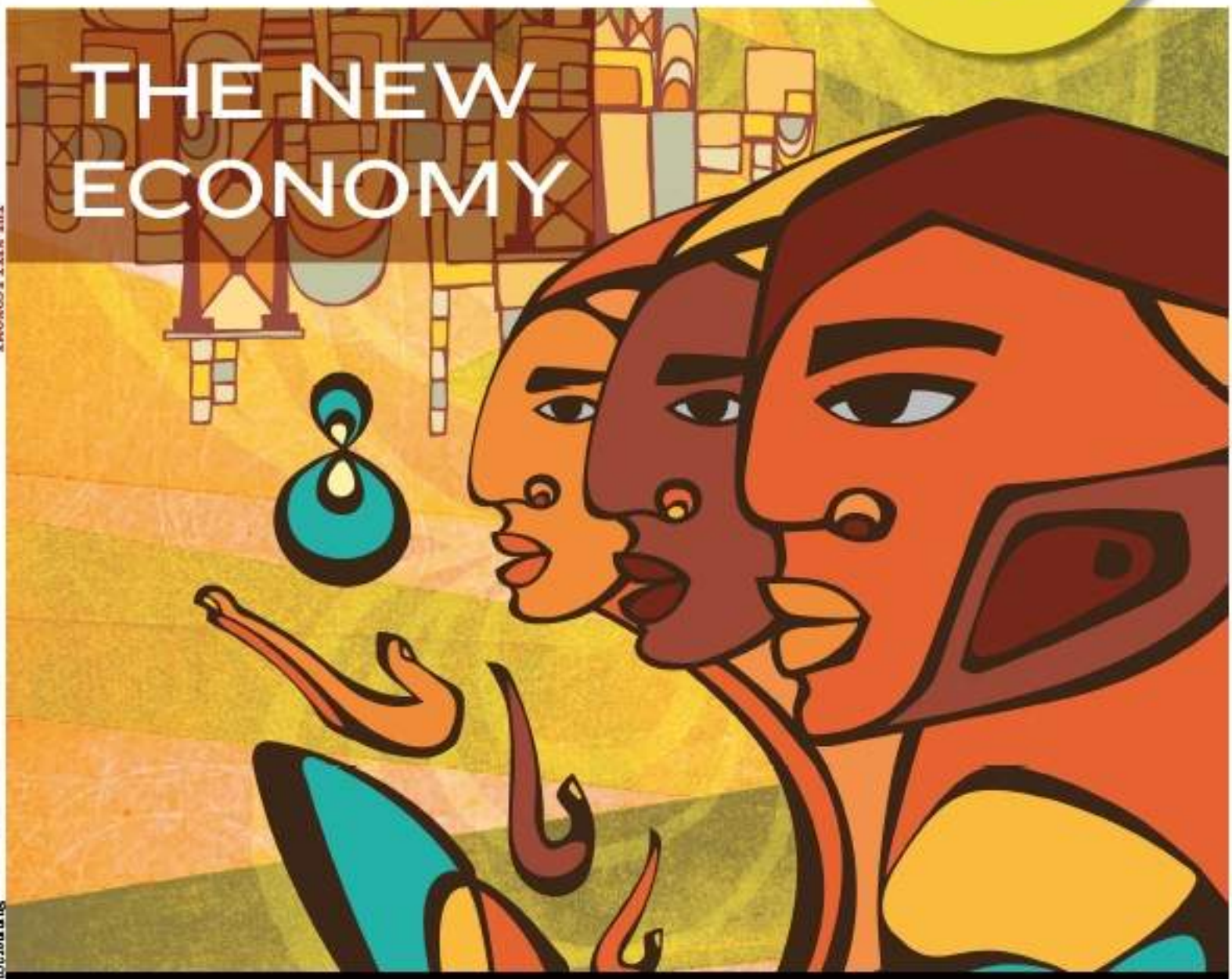
SUMMER 2018

A MYSTICAL TALE BY ARIEL DORFMAN

page 57


THE NEW
ECONOMY

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THE NEXT ECONOMY
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RECLAIM AMERICA 2018

SUMMER & FALL

A large majority of Americans do not support the direction our country has been moving in the past two years. The November 2018 elections offer an opportunity to express that discontent. But it's not obvious that people will take the opportunity.

Why?

Because many of those who disagree with the policies currently being pursued also have huge distaste for the forces that have been challenging those policies. Many Americans experience the liberal and progressive forces as filled with people who look down upon them, think they are "a basket of deplorables," racist, sexist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, xenophobic or just plain stupid. Combine this with the elitist attitudes of many in the Left and the pervasive religio-phobia that makes religious and spiritually-oriented people feel "less than" the supposedly enlightened people who shape the culture of many liberal and progressive movements, and you get the present reality: people disagreeing with the policies of the Right but unwilling to put back into power the people on the Left who detest them.

So if you want to reclaim America this summer and fall, you need to be engaged in outreach to the people who don't yet feel comfortable supporting liberal and progressive movements. As a non-profit, Tikkun does not endorse candidates or political parties. But we do endorse a new attitude for those who are seeking to reclaim America and a new way of connecting to those who do not yet agree with liberal and progressive programs. For that reason, our interfaith and secular-humanist and atheist-welcoming Network of Spiritual Progressives offers a training in how to be an effective social change activist in the Trump years. Details at **www.spiritualprogressives.org/training.**

One very positive development is the revival of the spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Poor People's Campaign led by the Rev. Barber of North Carolina. Their influence can play a valuable role as long as they prevent the dynamics described above from reemerging in what has so far been an exemplary campaign against poverty and racism.

TIK33.3-cover-3PP.indd 2

Tikkun

SUMMER 2018

EDITORIAL

3 Two-State Solution Dead? Time for One Person/One Vote

POLITICS & SOCIETY

6 When My Mother Wanted to Die
MARGARET MORGANROTH GULLETTE
Ageism is so pervasive that we barely even stop to acknowledge it. This has drastic consequences when the limits of our compassion begin impacting healthcare policy.

10 A Kabbalistic View of Healthcare Transformation
MARTHA SONNENBERG, MD
Faced with the reality that doctors have the highest suicide rate among the professions, and so many people report unhappy experiences with the medical system, an M.D. explores what a true tikkun of healthcare would look like.

FEATURE: THE NEXT ECONOMY

16 Introduction to the Next Economy | SIMON MONT
An economy in line with our deepest spiritual values is not only possible, it is already emerging around us. The feature section of this issue explores a few dimensions of recent developments.

18 Coming Home | MORDECAI COHEN ETTINGER, MA
The movement for a new economy is built on a spiritual materialism that calls upon us to return to our true natures as individuals, communities, and societies. An overview of the vision and progress in an exciting community of visionaries.

24 Partnerism | RIANE EISLER
Focusing on the debate between capitalism and socialism obscures the more fundamental point that both systems are based on domination. The economy we need will be based on partnership.

32 The King Midas Monoculture | EDGAR S. CAHN
We have built a society that is obsessed with turning everything into money. In order to survive, we need to find new ways to create, perceive, and exchange value.

39 Creating New Economies Through the Urban Commons
JAY CUMBERLAND
Cities are the sites of stark oppression and alienation, but they are also the sites of many practical solutions to extractive economics. This adaptation of "Shareable Cities" shows how citywide transformations are possible.

45 Feeding Children, Communities, and Souls | PAMELA HAINES
An intimate portrait of a rural community's work to undermine the military industrial complex, subvert capitalism, reclaim land, and bond faith communities together.

Cover Image: Micah Bazant

Healing Healthcare
Martha Sonnenberg
page 10

We can't build a world of love and generosity by simply electing Democrats, particularly since many have been selected not for their agreement with progressive ideals, but because they are seen as "electable" even though quite conservative.

We have an alternative strategy: building a new kind of outreach to Americans based on Prophetic Empathy and overcoming their legitimate anger at leftist elitism and religio-phobia. Become an activist with us!

www.spiritualprogressives.org/training

Corrections for our Winter/Spring 2018 issue

-Page 2: Charles Burack is the correct name of the author of Decolonizing Jewishness
-Page 46: The correct author biography is as follows: Phoenix Soleil is an artist, activist and teacher. She is a partner at LIFT Economy and led trainings in communication, racial justice, and emotional resiliency for individuals, groups, and organizations. Check out her website: phoenixsoleil.com
-Page 47: Image credit: Ren Rathbone and Dani Klein
-Page 58: Credit for the author photograph: Ileia Burgos
-Page 53: The quote "right to embrace difference and yet enjoy access to power" should be attributed to Cheryl Greenberg
-Page 51: Endnote 2 should appear after "never really white in the first place."
-Page 56: Endnote 3 should appear after: "mode of production of the new man."

50 Organizations that Embrace Interdependence
JENNIFER RAU AND JERRY KOCH-GONZALEZ
We need to change more than what we do, we need to change how we do it. Two practitioners discuss how to create liberating systems of organizational and community self-governance.

54 Anchoring the Heart of a Democratic Economy
J. TYSON CASEY AND CRISTINA MOON
When large institutions are under threat, it is even more essential that we find the agency to embody direct democracy in our relationships with one another.

CULTURE

57 Letters to Ganesha | ARIEL DORFMAN
One of the world's most creative public intellectuals and novelists takes us on a beautiful fantasy trip that might be truer than "real" life.

65 The Years of Dialogue | SIDRA DEKOVEN EZRAHI
In a time when negotiations between Israel and Palestine are particularly fraught, we remember how two people were able to create dialogue between people who were often at each other's throats.

70 *Frozen Out* | CHANTAL TOM AND AMELIA RAVITZ-DWORKIN
A web series about gentrification and climate change doesn't just shed light on an important intersection of issues, it is a shining example of how communities can take control over public narratives.

BACK INSIDE COVER: Tikkun Recommends

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Two-State Solution Dead? Time for One Person/One Vote

BY RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

Prime minister Netanyahu and President Trump have finally achieved together what both of them sought for Israel-Palestine: namely the death of the two-state option that would have created a politically and economically viable Palestinian state.

The primary victory belongs to Netanyahu and the policies he pursued as prime minister of Israel. Through his persistent encouragement of the expanding settlements in the West Bank, he managed to encourage hundreds of thousands of new settlers to create a reality in which Israeli Jews would ignore the liberation struggle of the Palestinian people and settle on land often stolen from neighboring Palestinian villages.

Meanwhile, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), which once prided itself on being the most ethical in the world, and the Israeli judicial system have together transformed themselves into instruments of occupation and oppression. The Israeli Human Rights organization B'tselem has documented this process over the course of several decades. In a B'tselem report in January 2018 documenting how two new settlement outposts in the northern Jordan Valley are being created, B'tselem reflects on how these particular settlements are typical of the way the current Israeli government manages to expel local Palestinian communities through a combination of military orders, administrative and planning measures, and military activity. In this context, the settlers function as the long arm of the state:

"The impact of the settlement outposts far exceeds their built-up areas. The settlers living in them put a great deal of effort into blocking Palestinian shepherds from accessing their land. To this end, they use intimidation tactics, such as patrolling the area on horseback or driving ATV's, armed with guns and clubs, and driving away Palestinian shepherds. B'Tselem has documented incidents in which settlers rode into a herd of sheep to disperse them, ran over livestock or threw stones at them. We have also documented threats and violence against the shepherds themselves."

Settlers take over pastureland and use it to pasture their own cattle and flocks, while keeping Palestinian shepherds from using the land. In doing so, they seriously harm the Palestinian shepherds' main source of income.

"Members of the affected communities have complained to the Israeli military and police about the routine of violence they have been subjected to, but Israeli law enforcement agencies systematically avoid taking any measures against settlers. Palestinian residents report that even when soldiers are on the scene during attacks by settlers, they stand by, taking the part of the settlers.

"The establishment of these settlement outposts and the violence perpetrated by their residents against local Palestinians do not take place in a vacuum. They form an inseparable part of Israel's policy in the Jordan Valley ever since 1967, which includes a variety of official and unofficial measures designed to minimize Palestinian presence in the area and further establish Israeli control of it. As part of this general policy, Israel denies Palestinians use of 85% of the Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea, using this area for its own needs: Palestinians may not build in these areas, live there, graze their livestock there, or cultivate their land. Palestinian access is denied based on various legal pretexts: as early as 1967, a few short months after the Occupation began, Israel declared all the land that had been registered as government property under Jordanian rule—an area that covers 53% of the Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea—as closed zones. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the military declared 45.7% of the Jordan Valley as firing zones and barred all Palestinians access to these areas, including living there. . . .

"Added to all this is the blanket ban Israel has placed on construction in these Palestinian communities, whether for public or residential purposes, its refusal to connect the communities to basic water and electricity services and to build access roads to the communities. When, having no other choice, residents build without permits, the Civil Administration issues demolition orders. Whether executed or not, the threat of these orders constantly looms over the residents. In some of these communities, the Civil Administration repeatedly demolished homes belonging to the same residents."

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While the Israeli government provides special roads for the Jewish settlers (from which Palestinians are banned), provides them with access to water and electricity, plus military and police protection unavailable to Palestinians, and creates check points through which Jewish settlers can travel without hassle, Palestinians are often delayed for 2–3 hours, making travel between nearby towns extremely difficult.

Meanwhile, a significant section of Netanyahu's Likud party, as well as other Right-wing parties in the Israeli Knesset, is seeking a de facto annexation of much of the West Bank into Israel.

The Palestinian Authority had agreed to participate in negotiations with Israel despite the fact that Netanyahu continually made clear to his constituents that he had no intention of allowing a Palestinian state to emerge (a pledge he repeated on the eve of the 2016 Knesset election). Their condition was that Israel would release some of the Palestinians being held in Israeli jails. Israel agreed to a list that Palestinians created of key anti-Occupation activists and some others who were being held without charges. Negotiations opened. Yet when the moment came for the release of the most significant Palestinians, Israel refused to follow through on its commitment to the Palestinians and the US mediators, and the Palestinians then refused to continue the negotiations (during which another 14,000 Israelis settled in the West Bank). After 3 Israeli teens were kidnapped and murdered by former members of Hamas, Israel invaded Gaza in the summer of 2014 and a war began. Here is the 2014 Gaza War by the numbers:

Palestinians killed: 2,139
Palestinian children killed: 490

Israeli soldiers killed: 64
Israeli civilians killed: 2
Israeli children killed: 1

Palestinians wounded: 11,000
Palestinian children wounded: 3,000

Gaza residents displaced: Up to 500,000
Homes destroyed in Gaza: 20,000

The impact of this war was still felt in Israel as Hamas attempted to shell Israeli cities almost every day in the summer of 2014. Even though those cities were protected by a new defense system that the Obama Administration made available to Israel, millions of Israelis were forced to spend hours in air raid shelters almost every day that summer, traumatizing many. So despite the fact that the Palestinian Authority had for the past 6 years been in de facto alliance with Israeli ccupation forces in attempting (mostly successfully) to prevent Palestinian terrorist attacks on the settlers, as well as on Israelis within the Green Line (the border of Israel before its conquest of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967), Hamas recredited the Israeli Right-wing story that Israelis were in military danger and "the Palestinians" sought to murder them.

This gift to Netanyahu continued to pay off as Israelis moved to the Right and the peace forces dramatically declined in Israeli society from 2014 right up through the present moment in 2018. Netanyahu faced less and less resistance to expanding the Occupation, and the Obama administration continued to veto Security Council resolutions condemning Israeli human rights violations (except one that came up after the Democrats had lost the 2016 election, condemning the Occupation but including no actual measures that would compel Israel to begin to end the Occupation).

It's time to advocate for "one person, one vote" for anyone living under Israeli rule—perhaps that approach might move Israelis toward a two-state solution currently perceived to be dead.

With this background, the Trump administration arrived in power, owed to massive support from Christian Evangelicals who believe that God gave the land of Israel to the Jews and that it is important for the U.S. to give blind support to its government until the Second Coming of Jesus. According to them, the Jews will either convert to Christianity or be condemned to Hell—an alliance gleefully endorsed by Right-wing Jews who are not much worried about the imminence of a Second Coming. Trump appointed an ambassador to Israel who opposed a two-state solution, and then announced that the U.S. recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and would move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Well, of course Jerusalem is in fact the capital of the State of Israel, AND it is also the location of one of Islam's most sacred holy places, Al-Aqsa Mosque, so the Palestinian people see Jerualem as the capital of any future Palestinian state. Trump's decision was seen by people all over the world as a repudiation of the peace process in which the future of Jerusalem was to be a central item for negotiation. When Trump went further and threatened to cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, declared that the U.S. could no longer serve as a mediator between Israel and Palestine, and that the Oslo Accord, which was supposed to result in a two-state reality by 1999, was now completely dead. Irresponsibly, Abbas then

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repeated an account of the history that seemed to suggest that Jews had no legitimate claim on any part of the Land of Israel, reinforcing the Israeli Right's claim that Palestinians really sought a state only as a stepping stone toward expelling all of the Jews.

Palestinian outrage at Trump in particular and at U.S. policy for the past decades in general is largely justified for all the reasons listed above. Many Israeli peace activists believe that the real goal of the Netanyahu/Trump alliance is a complete ethnic cleansing in which most Palestinians, including Palestinians living inside the Green Line but receiving far less services in their mostly segregated towns than Jewish Israelis, would voluntarily leave and resettle in other Arab countries. Other peace activists worry that Israel is prepared to live with Palestinians in an apartheid reality for the next hundred years, given the fear that many Israelis still have that the world is against them, and that without a completely Jewish state, Jews will be vulnerable again to the kind of anti-Semitism that we saw in Charlottesville in the summer of 2017.

With two states off of almost everyone's agenda, it is time for the peace forces both in Israel and around the world to embrace the demand for One Person, One Vote for Palestinians living in Israel. That de facto binational state could get traction if linked to Israel's finally getting a constitution that guarantees citizenship and full equality of rights to all and an eternal right of return to both Jews and Palestinians. Or it might lead Israeli rightists to see a two-state solution as less dangerous and get serious about negotiating its creation with Palestinians. Yet many of these same people would accept the logic of One Person, One Vote, a demand that many strongly supported against the apartheid regime in South Africa and against segregation in the South of the U.S. Granting West Bank Palestinians living under Israeli rule the same rights as Israeli Jews is so intuitively right that it could win far greater support than any strategy based on coercing Israelis to change their policies.

A movement that was serious about changing the political realities would be wise to use its time now doing door-to-door, synagogue-to-church-to-mosque-to-ashram, high school-to-university organizing around this demand and winning support for it. And many Israelis would respond far better to that idea than to a Palestinian state. If such a movement takes root and starts to grow, we may even see many American Jews who are "liberal on everything except Israel" find themselves embracing that demand mandated by their previous commitment to democratic and human rights values. Going in this direction could help the Jewish world win back their own youth who have been moving further away from a Judaism that treats support for Israel as more central than belief in God or observing the Sabbath and other core Jewish traditions. If Judaism could return to the strand in our tradition that teaches us to "love the stranger/the Other" and to manifest compassion, generosity, repentance and forgiveness, we could easily see a Jewish renewal worthy of celebration. Otherwise, Israel's expulsion of African refugees and its brutal murders and woundings of thousands of unarmed Gazan protesters will increasingly shape how Jews are perceived and (sadly) increasingly hated around the world. We have a lot to repent for this coming Yom Kippur. ■

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When My Mother Wanted to Die

The Neglected Issues of Ageist Undertreatment

MARGARET MORGANROTH GULLETTE

My mother was an active, healthy 91-year-old when she fell on a marble floor in her high-rise, badly damaging three vertebrae. She didn't tell me or go to a doctor, so by the time I arrived in Florida four days later she was in agony, having taken nothing stronger than Tylenol. No doctor I reached that night would make a house-call. She kept moaning, "I want to die." The next day her aide and I somehow got her to a doctor, who prescribed something so inadequate that she was screaming the next night. The facts blur, but eventually in desperation I called a friend, a pediatrician in another city, who said to insist on Oxycontin. I did, and that night my mother slept. And so did I. But the pediatrician also said, "This is standard medical practice. So your mother is 91? They don't want her to become an addict." (This was before the opioid epidemic, long before doctors were getting blamed for over-prescribing.) My mother recovered; she learned to walk again normally. She was never addicted.

No adult child should ever have to hear a parent say that she wants to die for untreated pain. Yet, as Dawn L. Denny and Ginny W. Guido, two nursing professors, report, adults over 70 are the group at the highest risk for undertreatment of pain. In long-term care settings, a fourth of older adults may not receive adequate pain relief.[1] Malpractice can be defined as injurious, negligent practice. Undertreating elder's pain is only one kind of malpractice against those among us who have survived into later life, a group that now includes me and most of my friends. Hard as it is to say after my mother's ghastly, traumatizing ordeal in Florida, what happened is not by any means the worst story. *Medical ageism* takes many forms—in nursing, medicine, and surgery, in care given by EMTs and in hospitals, in treatments for disease and for acute attacks. Over the years I have collected startling scientific news about patterns of neglect.

One of the startling examples comes from a study of 335 Welsh patients, whose ages ranged from as young as 30 to 101. It found that the length of a cardiac resuscitation attempt declined with age, with those aged over 70 receiving a median resuscitation time that is astonishingly shorter: 6 minutes versus 13 minutes for those under 70.[2]

If you are a woman with breast cancer who is over 65, the odds of *not* receiving chemotherapy are 7 times greater than for a woman under 50.[3] Indeed, a survey of physicians in the *Oncologist* concluded many cancer specialists would deny older people with colon, breast, lung, and prostate cancers the potentially life-saving treatments that they would offer younger people, even in circumstances when the former could benefit as much.[4]

Older patients often come out of hospital stays sicker than they went in: they may need quick rehospitalization or die of causes like sepsis, heart arrhythmia, and pneumonia, which might be prevented. There may be many reasons why. But one Harvard study of 1,000,000 Medicare patients found that female physicians are better than male doctors at keeping down re-hospitalizations and preventing such deaths. If male doctors achieved the same outcomes, the article in *Journal of the American Medical Association Internal Medicine* estimated, annual deaths of Medicare patients would drop by 32,000.[5] What behaviors, training, or attitudes might explain this gendered difference in care? I'll come back to this and discuss how ageism works.

These examples—inadequate CPR, unequal treatment of some cancers, and hospital neglect—are evidence-based instances of undertreatment. There are also systemic problems that disparately impact older people. Fragmentation of care is one, where patients with multiple issues are seen by different and uncoordinated specialists. These can turn deadly serious, but bias is harder to measure.

* * * * *

Undertreatment has many causes, and ageism is a major one. Ageist assumptions that many laypeople share — arising

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from ignorance about the variable experiences of old age and impatience at bodily difference—produce disabling fears of older people themselves, and of old women in particular, the majority of the very old. Much of ageism is sexist ageism combined with ableism. Compound stereotypes and fears are confirmed by the "medical model," which takes for granted that all people growing into old age are sick or frail. In decline discourse, aging brings no benefits; people can be considered no longer quite human. The first chapter of my most recent book, *Ending Ageism, or How Not to Shoot Old People*, is titled #StillHuman.

Heterogeneous as old people are, privileged as some may be, as a group, we endure many attributes of other numerical minorities: invisibility and hypervisibility, intolerance of our appearance, lack of audiences for our subjectivities, underestimation of our trials, dislike of our alleged characteristics or disgust at our apparent weaknesses.

Younger people themselves often report, on what is called the "Fraboni scale" of social bias, that they don't want to listen to old people, look them in the eye, or spend time with them. They report these obnoxious behaviors openly, because they don't recognize them as prejudice. Such common attitudes, painful and repugnant in social life, become treacherous when they emerge in medical professionals.

Consider any medical training that does not insist on listening well, *particularly* to older patients. Defective pain management can arise from doctors' heightened avoidance of opioids for chronic pain, but also from not accepting the self-report from certain patients about acute pain. Not listening in clinical settings may occur more frequently when an old person, likely to be a woman (and/or a person of color or LGBTQ) is telling their story.

Some professionals see "Alzheimer's" too readily. Making an unwarranted assumption, they may overlook causes of hesitant or slow speech that are treatable, like dehydration, urinary tract infection, hearing loss, or simple shyness. Some fall into condescending "elderspeak." Geriatricians notice a range of prejudiced behaviors. "A person may be delirious or may not understand everything, but they do not like the patronising way physicians speak. . . . If someone has dementia, I still think the communication should be in a mature manner."[6] "When I look at the interns and residents I get shivers down my spine," this geriatric specialist concluded; seeing disregard of basic politeness and ignorance of nursing fundamentals and bioethics might make any of us shiver.

The Harvard *JAMA* study mentioned above, about the extra deaths of thousands of Medicare patients, begs for educated guesses about why gender matters in life-and-death caregiving to elders. Are some male doctors less comfortable with the bodies and issues of older women, who make up the core of the practice? Hospitalists, who are randomly assigned to patients, need to adequately weigh how long to give care, a determination which requires asking patients about their social and home circumstances. Women doctors do spend more time with patients, the prerequisite for listening and communicating. A GOMERs—"Get 'em Out of My Emergency Room!"—is a term for elderly patients that some doctors-in-training learn. "GOMERs" remind them that old people have complex problems that are difficult to treat. They will take more of your overworked, under-slept time; shunt them quickly to another part of the hospital. That advice and label are offered in that fictional Bible, Samuel Shem's *House of God*, often presented to residents as a classic that will help them get through that first hideous year when doctors are broken in to the reality of medicine. The young doctors who come into training moderately ageist may exit primed with more jokes about the moribund and heightened aversion to disability or frailty.

Some younger people believe people who are old and sick are ipso facto close to death. (My mother at 91, like a lot of the new nonagenarians, had many good, healthy years left and no wish to die.) Unless they have geriatrics training, some medical personnel may not feel that older people are as worth saving. One of the physician researchers I consulted says yes, professionals "perform CPR longer on those they value more," but CPR "has a pretty dismal success rate." Okay, then when they stop offering it to younger people as a best practice, they can give up on equal time for restarting my offended old heart.

Care of older cancer patients presents challenges related to the different biology of cancer in older persons, individual

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on 23 July 2018

health status, and co-morbidities. All these influence treatment selection. The incidence of some adverse side-effects increases with age, which argues for not offering a given treatment to people over a certain age in cases when costs are estimated to be greater than benefits. But some surgeons' simplified "estimates" may be short-changing older people. Age by itself—chronology as a fact, or agedness as an appearance—should not be determining "cost" in the financial sense either.

In the United States, individual states have statutes that specify what elder abuse entails. "Elder abuse" can certainly include hitting old people or stealing their money; it can also include *deprivation of care* that results in physical harm, pain, or mental suffering. Careless care may also lead to death. Researchers are beginning to conclude that undertreatment of older patients may be a reason for their having poorer outcomes than younger patients.

Why Is Undertreatment So Little Known?

The public is not well informed about such age-related disparities in health provision. For years, as researchers pointed to undertreatment as a serious public-health issue, in the public media many pundits, and even some gerontologists and feminists, continued to opine that "overtreatment" was the single most important public health target. One allegation is that doctors offer useless treatments to seriously ill people, in order to offer anything at all. Patients living with dying ought to be offered "all the options." By "all," I mean the well-meaning urge of medical professionals who help them tend to the quality of their life, and consider hospice or palliative care as the alternative to further treatment.

This is ethically acceptable, although hospice is not incompatible with further treatment. But the option some thought leaders want sick old people to consider foremost is: *just saying no to treatment*. At worst, they say explicitly that high cost is a national problem. President Obama himself said this, in an interview with the *New York Times* (April 28, 2009), when he said his beloved grandmother got a replacement for a broken hip at a time she had cancer. He would have paid for the operation himself if Medicare had not. But he also said that doing so as an "entitlement" may not be "a sustainable model."

Whether society's making those decisions in the aggregate to give my grandmother, or everybody else's aging grandparents or parents, a hip replacement when they're terminally ill is a sustainable model, is a very difficult question. If somebody told me that my grandmother couldn't have a hip replacement and she had to lie there in misery in the waning days of her life—that would be pretty upsetting.

So that's where I think you just get into some very difficult moral issues. But that's also a huge driver of cost, right?

I mean, the chronically ill and those toward the end of their lives are accounting for potentially 80 percent of the total healthcare bill.[7]

The argument that money should be ever more prominent in healthcare advice to the chronically ill and the dying is vicious, even if it could be proved that care going to them is actually 80 percent of the bill. It's no excuse that Obama spoke during the global financial crises. No one, least of all a president, should suggest that the "aggregate" of disabled, chronically ill, and dying people have less right to appropriate healthcare, as if healthcare should go only to the well. Or as if our lives were of less value than others.

The phrase "not sustainable" in relation to Medicare is an ageist dog whistle to Republicans prating about deficits in Medicare's impressively cost-effective program. Congress should focus on human well-being, on obtaining discounts on medications and devices permitted to Veterans Affairs, and clawing back revenue from the swollen military budget. Medicaid covers care for low-income disabled, sick, and old adults, a majority of whom are women. As I write, small-government neoliberals are trying to cut the budget for Medicaid in the new tax bill. This could force indigent people now in nursing homes into their adult children's houses (if they have children), or onto the street if they have no one able to care for them.

The focus on costs of overtreatment makes old people seem like a burden to be shucked. That focus has served as a distraction from the real problems of undertreatment. Alleged costs of overtreatment may yet serve as an insidious argument for rationing if undertreatment becomes an alarm bell. I have aged into the perilous later-life period, where, still healthy, I am learning to fear ageism across the board. At the most frightening time of our lives, when we become chronically ill, or grow old and ill, or get hurt in accidents, when we are liable to hospitalization or entrance into nursing homes, for whatever reason, we are the most threatened by those with power over us—some medical professionals, Republicans in Congress, and the general public's vast ignorance, alienation from old people, and trained indifference to ageism.

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Agewise Thinking Is the Answer

People who say they don't know what ageism is—or who think it is someone on the bus politely offering your tired muscles a soft seat—ought to recognize its dangerous forms. Some scientists say biomedical research is the key to health, but serving patients of all ages without fear or favoritism is where the well-being of older people truly lies. Researchers are beginning to ask, with regard to older patients: "How can we do better?" Agewise thinking is the answer of age critics: eliminate bias in training, practice, research, and public policy.

The data that the U.S. has more old people to care for, has not led—as it should have—to funding more faculty to teach geriatrics or more geriatricians giving direct care. Knowing about medical ageism might, because education can save us from prejudice.

Training and practice. Medical ageism ought to be a moral issue that medical schools confront. Training in communication and diversity would help, if "diversity" includes age, illness, and disability. The new oath that doctors take when they graduate from New York Medical College, Tulane, and UC-San Francisco includes a vow not to discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation.[8] This is just. But why are ageism and ableism omitted? Doctors conscious of other biases seem less aware of these. Women, people of color, Muslims, trans people, and other adults whom they may have learned to protect also grow old; and once enrolled in this new stigmatized category, may receive negligent care. (I call ageism in such cases the *replacement bias*.) Shouldn't a concerned public demand a vow of anti-ageism and anti-ableism from *all* medical schools?

The issue manifests in research practice: it was once a cruel discovery that women were omitted from heart-medication trials. Now, it is becoming known that representative older patients with multiple conditions or cognitive impairments are underrepresented in randomized controlled trials.[9] In trials evaluating new drugs for treating breast cancer, fewer than 10 percent of participants are 65 or older.[10] Ageist assumptions may prevent appropriate research agendas or distort data analysis.

All patients past midlife ought now to be given extra consideration, even before data about failures in particular treatments or outcomes, correlated with age, become available. Alerted to possible age bias, surgeons ought to reconsider older women and men with cancers of all types, mentally holding open the option of treatment. Ultimately, the public must respect a person's educated wish to choose to receive medical treatment at any age.

Ageism manifests in public policy: shouldn't the media reproach and shame millionaire Congresspeople for ageist ableism when the Solons manipulate budgets and tax breaks in order to cut Medicare and Medicaid? Medical ageism ought to be one moral and political issue that any thoughtful President confronts when he uses his bully pulpit to decide the future of healthcare. Everyone has a responsibility to transform our ageist culture, for their own sake as well as the collective good.

My darling mother lived to be 96, charming her family, her aides, and other residents in her assisted living community. She died in her own bed, in my presence, with the help of a devoted physician's hospice team and adequate morphine. During those five years, she never took more than an aspirin. She never again had to say "I want to die." ■

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Notes

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6. R9 is quoted in C. Brouwers et al., "Improving Care for Older Patients in the Acute Setting: A Qualitative Study with Healthcare Providers," *Netherlands Journal of Medicine*, 75, no. 8 (October 2017).

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A Kabbalistic View of Healthcare Transformation

MARTHA SONNENBERG, MD

I am the daughter of a physician and a nurse. My mother taught me that a doctor cannot function without the help of a nurse, and my father taught me that a doctor must treat patients with compassion. When I was a child, I often accompanied my father when he made house calls and hospital rounds, and I watched him care for his patients with love, humor, and compassion. I would spend hours studying the contents of his black doctor's bag, inhaling the medicinal and antiseptic scents emanating from it, fascinated by the vials, syringes, and instruments that lay within its dark interior. Medicine and healthcare have been part of my life since I was a kid, and then I became a doctor myself. I am also a person with a chronic disease, asthma, for which I have been hospitalized multiple times. So I have witnessed healthcare from both sides. Over all this time, I have been thinking about medicine and healthcare and life and death, and never had the opportunity to put my thoughts together. Now, in retirement, I have that opportunity.

Limits of the Current Healthcare Debate

I am not going to take on the current debate about healthcare in terms of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) versus the most recent and cruel iteration of the Republican plan. I am not denying that there are significant differences between the two, which can give or take insurance coverage from tens of millions of people and profoundly affect those lives. Nor am I suggesting that we should not fight for healthcare as a right for all, my own preference being universal healthcare. But I consider that most of these current plans, including the ACA and even parts of Medicare for All, do not fundamentally challenge the culture in which healthcare is delivered. They are not transformational models that can deliver healthcare that is compassionate, and which provides meaningful work for caregivers. The "debate," typified on the liberal side by Paul Krugman, remains about insurance—who will be covered at what cost and reduces healthcare to issues of access. Important as access is, it nevertheless narrows our thinking about what we should expect from healthcare. These plans, because they limit our vision of what care of health could be, are the mitzrayim of modern medicine, and represent the exile and alienation of healthcare.

A Kabbalistic View

I would like to suggest an alternative way of seeing healthcare; that we look at healthcare within the context of a dialectic struggle between the Kabbalistic concepts of *Tohu* (chaos) and *Tikkun* (healing or wholeness). I propose that right now, we are in the midst of chaos, manifested by current models of the healthcare system.

With chaos, there is a lack of balance and order. The system is fragmented into smaller and smaller pieces, and therefore moves toward collapse. In Lurianic Kabbalah, this collapse refers to the breaking of the vessels of holiness. These vessels, also known as *sefirot*, or emanating spheres, contain the values of wisdom, understanding, power, love, mercy, endurance, judgment, beauty, etc. The values, or holiness, carried

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within the vessels are dispersed into an infinite number of holy sparks, and bring about a world of disharmony and unbalance, of spiritual and physical exile. Our work is to unite these sparks, hidden within the most mundane and sometimes the most challenging and painful experiences, thereby bringing about *Tikkun Olam*, a healing of the world, and in this case, the healing of healthcare.

Aspects of Chaos

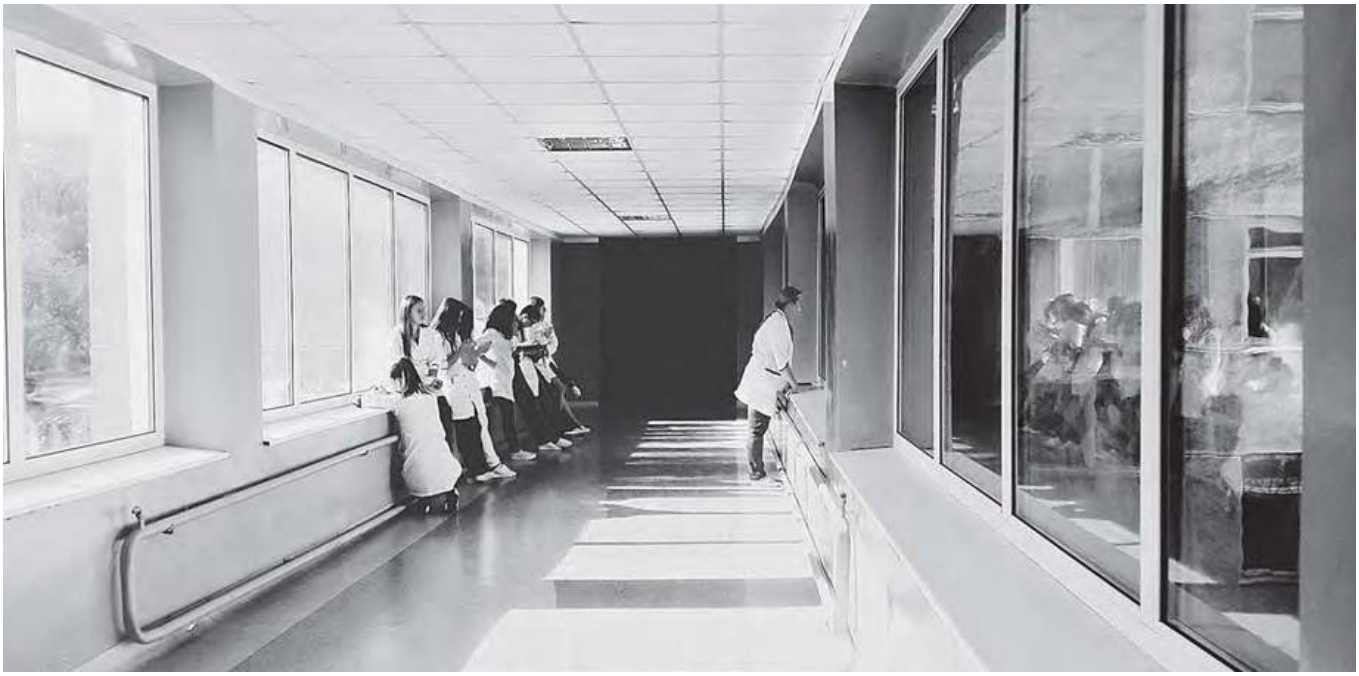
The chaos of modern healthcare is characterized by the absence of the values carried by the *sefirot*, the loss of compassion, understanding, etc. It is rare to find someone who has not suffered the profound consequences of this chaos. Here are just some aspects of chaos in current healthcare systems:

- You or your loved ones may have been treated in a rushed and cursory manner, as a disease and not as a human being.
- You may have been led to feel shame about your disease.
- You may have suffered from the lack of quality and safety in hospitals, getting a hospital-acquired infection, or been the recipient of an adverse drug reaction or a medication error.
- Maybe you've seen a loved one suffer the effects of neglect and negligence in a nursing home.
- Maybe you are taking so many medications you can barely keep them straight, if you can even afford them all, and no one has told you about possible drug interactions or side effects.
- Perhaps you or someone you love struggles with addiction, and you've sought help from doctors who have no understanding of addiction, and who may treat by prescribing even more medication.
- Maybe you are frustrated by a system that treats disease, but does not consider your vision, your hearing, or your teeth as part of your health and well-being.
- Maybe you are seeing multiple specialists and none of them talk to each other, they just treat the organ system or problem in which their expertise lies, and your body and sense of self become alienated and fragmented.

The chaos of modern medicine has profound effects on caregivers as well, whose lives and work, too, have become fragmented. The doctor, starting with medical education, sees himself or herself as a heroic and elite fighter against disease, and the death of a patient as a failure of treatment. When doctors see themselves and their activity in this way, we become insensitive and oblivious to the wholeness of the people we treat, and therefore the vulnerability in ourselves. We cut ourselves off from our own feelings as we fear we will appear unprofessional. We start to see ourselves as experts, and we begin to believe that we are superior to all around us. We accept the hierarchical nature of medicine—we see patients as objects and other healthcare workers simply as a means to carry out our orders. This is why the joke that circulated around medical students had such resonance:

> Two old guys, Irving and Abe, died and went to heaven. They were in the cafeteria line for lunch, when a man in a white coat pushes ahead of everyone to the front of the line. "Who IS that guy?" they ask the person next to them in line. The person replies, "Oh, that's God; he thinks he's a doctor."

This fragmentation takes its toll: doctors and nurses, and most healthcare workers, are pretty unhappy in their work these days. The pressure to see patients quickly, 15 minutes/patient, to focus on the electronic record rather than the



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on 23 July 2018

patient, to be cut off from compassion: these are all aspects of chaos for caregivers. The general stress of the work environment leads to burnout, emotional numbness, depression, and frequent chemical dependency. Doctors now have one of the highest rates of suicide among the professions.

The History of Chaos

How did this chaos come about? There were four developments in the late 18th and early 19th centuries which led to chaos in healthcare:

- First was the development of medicine as a profession rather than a craft, with the elevation of doctors as elite—strong on power and weak on empathy. Concurrently, hospitals became the repositories for the treatment of the ill, with further separation of charity hospitals for the poor and private hospitals for the wealthy and the beginnings of two standards of care.
- Second was the development of the insurance industry from early disability insurance. As a result of the economic crises of the Depression, WWII, and the increased economic health-cost burden of an expanding population, the insurance industry expanded unchecked, leaving us today with the monstrous behemoth that controls who gets care, what care is given, and by whom, where, and for how long. Again, we have a lot of power concentrated in the industry, with little wisdom, judgment, or kindness.
- Third was the development of germ theory, which led to the focus of medicine on drugs and technology as the treatment model, with little or no attention to social and environmental factors leading to disease. Here we have wisdom and knowledge, but a dearth of understanding.
- Fourth was the relation of modern medicine to military history—most advances, especially in the area of surgery and antibiotics, came from military need and experience, where the defining focus was one of power. That has affected how doctors (and the public) look at medicine. The language of contemporary medicine tells the story—the first antibiotics were called "magic bullets." Now we talk of an *antibiotic armamentarium*, of *shotgun therapy*, of bringing out the *big guns*, of fighting, battling, conquering disease. The human being becomes merely the battlefield wherein this conflict rages. And, largely, the public has bought into this, thinking that if they "fight" long enough and hard enough, they may be cured of a disease, and feeling somehow failed or less than if they don't want to fight. How many obituaries have we read of people who died "after a long battle with . . . ?"

This notion of a militaristic battle as a solution to disease can lead people to often unnecessary procedures, unbearable treatments, with painful complications and side effects, and which may not ultimately benefit them at all. I saw so much of this during my career—patients with untreatable cancers or other terminal illnesses undergoing surgeries, chemotherapies, aggressive antibiotic regimens that didn't really help them, and it happens because many doctors tell their frightened but poorly informed patients and families that they must do everything to fight the disease.

I am not a therapeutic nihilist, and I don't deny that modern medicine has done and continues to do some great things, but I am saying that we need some perspective. I am suggesting that we take a hard look at our tendency to worship at the altar of modern medicine, that perhaps we sometimes make modern medicine into a veritable Golden Calf.

The Holy Sparks Within the Chaos

Within all this chaos of healthcare, where are the sparks of holiness and wholeness? They are worth looking for, because their recognition gives us clues to the achievement of *Tikkun* out of *Tohu*. Here are some of the sparks I have seen:

- In the midst of the AIDS epidemic came at least three sparks:
  - » First, patients demanded they not to be called "victims of AIDS," but rather "people with AIDS." They refused to be seen as a passive battlefield on which treatment was given. This was a profound reclamation of humanity, love, compassion, and wholeness in the midst of disease.
  - » Second, they refused to accept death as separate from life and demanded that the medical environment help them orchestrate "good deaths" for their loved ones. They insisted that hospitals allow friends, lovers, and family to be present at the bedsides, or they declined aggressive measures and took their loved ones home. This opened the door for the medical community to re-examine how it dealt with death.
  - » Third, the epidemic showed that people, the families of PWA, were capable of profound transformations in their ways of thinking. Parents who had initially rejected their child's sexual identity came to accept that child for who they were with love and compassion.
- Sparks are evident in the passion of healthcare workers who love their jobs in spite of the pressures:
  - » Nurses who reject the subordinate roles imposed upon them, to confront the authority of the physician in the interests of their patients. Nurses who point out important diagnostic findings that doctors, in their hurry, may have missed. Nurses who advocate for their patients when a patient does not want a particular treatment, or when a treatment or procedure was unlikely to alleviate suffering. I certainly see the midwives Shifra and Puah as precedent sparks in the Torah, as they refused to follow Pharaoh's command to slay Jewish male infants.
  - » Healthcare workers who diffuse our fears. When I was on a respirator after a severe asthma attack coming out of a medically induced coma, the first thing I saw was the smiling face of a respiratory therapist. That smile gave me

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on 23 July 2018

hope and courage. It was the smile of an angel, emanating compassion. Those healthcare angels are everywhere if you look for them—they may be respiratory therapists, dieticians, custodial workers, and transport workers who, with a word, or a smile, can humanize an otherwise terrifying experience for the ill person.

» Sparks are evident in the joy and enthusiasm seen when healthcare workers and physicians come together as a team to improve a patient's care and experience, when they show mutual respect for each other, come up with new and creative solutions to problems, and learn from each other: a true balancing of wisdom, judgment with compassion, and empathy.

» Sparks are evident in hospice and palliative care programs and in the increasing number of physicians, like Atul Gawande, Jessica Nutik Zitter, and Rachel Naomi Remen, who are speaking out for compassionate and respectful care for the dying and terminally ill.

What Does Tikkun Look Like for Healthcare?

Let us look at the word "health"—it actually means wholeness, being whole and sound, from the Old English word, "hale". That should bring to mind another word for wholeness: "*shalom*." Health is *shalom*. In the *Mi Sheberech* prayer, we ask for "*Refuah Shlemah*," a complete healing—we do not mean just a physical recovery, but a spiritual healing as well—it can even mean a comforting acceptance of disability or death. We ask for the wholeness of our bodies, our minds, and our soul-spirits, as well as our interconnectedness with those around us, and with the world. This should be a part of our expectation from healthcare.

Tikkun for healthcare is about connectedness, and it requires that each of us be connected to our own hearts, and therefore to others. In 1956, Abraham Joshua Heschel spoke to the American Medical Association and said, "To heal a person, you must first BE a person." In the tradition of Maimonides, Heschel was telling doctors not to be aloof medical automatons, so obsessed with objective distance that they lost their humanity. He was imploring doctors to balance their wisdom with their capacity for love, mercy, and empathy. He was asking doctors to allow themselves their feelings so they could relate to the feelings of others. Had this been heeded, many of my colleagues might have been less fearful of their own vulnerability and might have avoided their own depression. The profession might have been more able to heed Maimonides' exhortation that "the physician should treat the patient, not the disease," or his hope, "May I never see in the patient anything but a fellow creature in pain."

Nachman's Story

The ability to see "a fellow creature in pain" brings to mind a famous story of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, called "The Prince Who Thought He Was a Turkey."

A prince once became ill and thought that he was a turkey. He sat naked under the table, pecking at bones and pieces of bread, like a turkey. All the royal physicians gave up hope of curing him, and his father, the king, grieved tremendously.

One day, an old sage arrived and said, "I will attempt to cure the prince." The sage then undressed and sat naked under the table next to the prince, and also picked at bones and crumbs. "Who are you?" asked the prince, "and what are you doing here?" The sage replied, "And you? What are YOU doing here?"

"I am a turkey," said the prince. The sage responded, "I also am a turkey."

They sat together for some time, until they became comfortable with each other. One day, the sage signaled the king's servants to throw him shirts. He said to the prince, "What makes you think that a turkey can't wear a shirt? You can wear a shirt and still be a turkey." With that, the two of them put on shirts. After a while, the sage again signaled for some pants, and asked, "What makes you think a turkey can't wear pants?"

They continued in this manner, and then the sage signaled for some regular food, asking the prince, "What makes you think that you will stop being a turkey if you eat good food? You can eat whatever you want and still be a turkey." And they both ate the food.

Finally, the sage asked, "What makes you think a turkey must sit under the table? Even a turkey can sit at the table." And so it continued until the prince was totally cured.

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This story shows us how healing takes place in an environment of non-judgmental acceptance, when we respect the uniqueness and wholeness of an ill person, rather than trying to impose upon them what modern medicine may prescribe.

Bikkur Cholim

Another facet of what we should desire from healthcare is Bikkur Cholim, the mitzvah of visiting the sick, another way of healing, through connecting with the ill. It is our communal responsibility for health. When we visit the sick, we may remove obstacles to healing, like fear, loneliness, shame, or depression, as we remind the ill person of our connections with them and their connections with us. *Bikkur Cholim* need not be somber or reverent—it just requires "being there." A friend of mine put it so well:

> "I have spent the last ten years of my life holding people I love through medical issues. Driving to doctors' appointments, sitting in emergency rooms, cleaning bedpans, and sleeping in hospitals. I have seen so many people . . . show their best selves in the center of the storm of medical crisis . . . (I feel) committed to show up for any person who needs me in a health crisis, with love, money, schlepping, and chicken soup."

Our Health and Global Health

Healthcare connects us to the world around us. Moses said on the borders of Canaan, "Take heed to thyself and take care of your lives" (Deut. 4:9). Abraham Joshua Heschel said:

> "Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement . . . get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal, incredible. Never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed."

For both Moses and Heschel, taking care of our lives includes attention to and taking care of the life of the planet. It means attention to how we nourish ourselves, what foods we eat and how we prepare them. It means we take care of our world and its climate, its plants, its animals, its water, its air.

Climate change and climate extremes take a tremendous toll on our health and our wholeness. We need just look at the heartbreaking devastations of Puerto Rico, Mexico, Cuba, Florida, and Houston. We **will** experience increasing epidemics of infectious diseases, contaminated water, polluted air, famine, hunger and starvation, and creations of mass migrations of populations. We need to observe *Bikkur Cholim* for our febrile and ailing planet. This is part of healthcare.

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Life and Death

To bring health in from exile, the healing of healing, we must ultimately reconnect those two imponderables that define us as mortal beings: life and death.

Of course, we place great value on life. The Talmud says that "a single man was created in the world, to teach that: if any person . . . saves a single soul, it is as if she saved a whole world." The same is said in the Koran: "He who has restored life to a man shall be accounted as if he had restored life to humanity." In the Torah portion Nitzavim, Moses tells us that God has said, "I have set before you life and death . . . now choose life so that you and your children shall live" (Deut. 30:19).

These statements are an exhortation to live life fully, wholly, and with radical amazement, connected to others and the world. But our technology-, profit-, and expertise-ridden culture narrowly interprets the statements in the most restrictive way, as justification to fear or avoid death when it is near. Rabbi Zalman Schecter Shalomi said that our fear of death stems from our separation from the whole of life, the opposite of the "radical amazement" that Heschel wished for us. In fact, the presence of death should deepen our appreciation of life—and this, I believe, is the profound meaning of the *Mourners' Kaddish*, which celebrates life just at the moment when we have experienced the loss of a loved one. Grief, said the poet Rumi, "can be the garden of compassion."

Befriending death, to borrow a term from Rachel Remen, means that we stop defining death as the enemy, that we care for our dying with compassion and allow the dying person to define what is best for them—that we alleviate their suffering on their terms, not ours. It means not "doing everything" for the person who is ready to die but making sure that we have removed anything that hinders the departure of their soul. It means knowing when to let a loved one go with love.

The real challenge of *tikkun* for healthcare begins with each of us, as individuals, and extends to our relationships with each other and to the life and world around us. First, we stay honest with our own feelings (we let ourselves BE a person), and we strive to imbue our relationships with others with compassion, empathy, and curiosity.

Then, we care for each other, we stand up for ourselves and our loved ones and make sure we get what we want and need from doctors, hospitals, and healthcare organizations. We hold healthcare organizations accountable for delivering compassionate care and for supporting the caregivers who provide that care. We teach medical students humility rather than elitism. We question authority. We promote working together as teams to deliver the most compassionate care we can with the highest quality of care. We live our lives fully, with chronic disease or terminal disease, with recovery from addiction, and without shame, and we befriend death when it is time.

When we recognize and start to unify the sparks of hope in the midst of chaos, we begin to develop the vision of what real healthcare can mean. With that vision we are better able to create healthcare for all, eliminating the stranglehold of the pharmaceutical and insurance industries on our lives.

Faith Rogow writes in her poem:

> As we bless the source of life, so we are blessed.
> And our blessings give us strength, and make our visions clear
> And our blessings give us peace, and the courage to dare.

Taking care of health requires that strength, vision, and courage. Really taking care of health is liberatory, and even revolutionary. It is ultimately a blessing. ■

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on 23 July 2018

Introduction to the Next Economy

SIMON MONT

Capitalism is collapsing under the weight of itself, and it's not pretty. The planet is fighting back against our abuse of the environment, geopolitical tensions are escalating in tandem with popular confusion and panic, and we have levels of income inequality that would make a robber baron blush. In a sense, transitioning away from the limitless extraction and profit creation is actually a logical necessity. Our current macro-economy is predicated on the notion that GDP will rise exponentially, that more money will be created to pay the interest on the loans that buttress our economy, and that material resources will be used to create the value to fuel those forms of growth. Infinite growth in a world of finite resources isn't practicable math.

The next fifty years will bring a tremendous transition; the question is what that transition will look like. Will it look like a return to the awe, connection, and resilience that is indigenous to all hearts; or will it look like tech-fueled tyrants using wealth and power to protect themselves against a collapse of civilization? The arc of the moral universe is long, but it only bends toward justice when we cast our vision to the future and start pulling.

The feature section for this issue is about a movement that is doing exactly that. It is known by many names: new economy, next economy, solidarity economy, and just transition are only a few. It is comprised of a complex ecosystem of people, communities, organizations, ideas, and strategies all focused on one goal: finding a way to supply our material needs in a way that actualizes our highest ideals for humanity while regenerating the life-sustaining capacity of our planet.

The thing that distinguishes this movement from others is its theory of change. It seeks to create new economies, new ways of managing resources and needs, *right now*. It is not primarily concerned with building enough power or will to seize existing means of production and distribution or occupying existing governance systems; it is concerned with creating new means, no matter what scale, in the face of an economic apparatus that attempts to render all alternatives impossible. As new solutions that implement shared power, shared ownership, shared responsibility, and shared destiny claim bits of physical, psychic, and experiential terrain, the movement networks them together to create a mycelium that will nourish the soil of a new world. What may appear to the untrained eye as a worker-owned bakery, a nonprofit credit union, a community revolving loan fund, or a local CSA are all actually evidence of a sophisticated network of enterprises building a new world right here in the shell of the old; and it uses every new experiment to incubate ideas that will feed everything else in the system.

Building a new economy, a new way to manage resources and care for ourselves in the here and now, is a necessary predicate for any large-scale social transformation. Many people understand that the ways that we currently feed, shelter, and clothe ourselves are dependent on violence and oppression; but we cannot abandon those systems on individual or societal scales unless there is a viable alternative. In fact, people won't even risk disrupting those systems unless there is something to replace them. I can tell you that your 401(k) is probably invested in private prisons, but you aren't going to change anything unless you have a reasonable expectation that you will be able to survive in retirement.

This is the trap we are in. Few of us have access to a viable alternative to the extractive, domination-based economic system that is currently sustaining us. Large-scale economic debates are limited because the vast majority of people are convinced there is no other way to run the system. Only by knowing how to stay alive without the dominant system can we actually have the courage and wisdom to abandon or dismantle it. If the only way to survive is to play by someone else's rules, then we will all end up playing by their rules. If we can sustain our own lives, then we are free to make our own lifeways and refrain from participating in their systems.

This doesn't mean we all need to learn how to be self-sufficient as individuals on farms. It means that we learn how to be self-sufficient as a diverse, grassroots, global community leveraging different expertise and every tool at our disposal. The logic goes a step beyond the familiar observation that if we have a farm, we don't need to be wage slaves

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to get money for produce. It helps us realize that unless we have clear alternatives to hold value and wealth and create stability, we will remain complicit participants in the very systems we criticize. Unless we create new banking institutions, we will still fuel the Wells Fargos of the world. This is currently playing out as cities like Seattle, Los Angeles, and Oakland pass resolutions to stop banking with institutions that support the Dakota Access Pipeline, only to promptly discover that there are no other institutions available that can meet their needs.

The movement for the next economy is not about isolated projects, it is about creating shared infrastructure (that consists of financial institutions, resources, trainings, etc.) that can support communities creating uncountable numbers of projects, each of which feeds and educates the shared infrastructure. It is relentlessly pragmatic and meets the world precisely where it is in order to plant the seed of a new reality. The new economy is not a fully formulated ideology. It is a groundswell to relying on a memory harbored in our hearts to make real a vision of humans returning to deep relationships with earth, spirit, and each other, that is constantly evolving and changing, while staying acutely cognizant of the fact that we *must* relearn how to keep ourselves alive without capitalism and extraction. And that learning is embodied and enacted, not simply thought and written.

We can think of it in terms of claiming territory. Capitalism has the land and has convinced most people that there is no life outside of it. The next economy claims space, little by little, transforming lives, designing scalable solutions, and learning how to govern in the process. Each small space claimed becomes an incubator of new ideas and a spiritually aligned material support system for people working on all other dimensions of healing. The next economy is scaling by sprouting replicable models custom-tailored to specific place-based contingencies and showing people that the economy is something we create through our actions, not something imposed on us from above.

We need it. We need to practice how to live another way, relate another way, and govern another way while building alternate systems. Otherwise, even if we do rise to power, we will exercise our power in the very way we know and despise because we will know no other way. True transformation takes practice.

The feature section of this issue provides a modest glimpse into an emerging reality by taking us on an arc from the abstract to the specific. The first piece, by Mordecai Cohen Ettinger, discusses some of the concepts at the center of next economy thought. Next, Riane Eisler discusses how the importance of partnership shows us how neither capitalism nor socialism will free us from the domination that plagues our current economy. Edgar S. Cahn brings us into more specific territory with his discussion of our pathological relationship to money and how new concepts of value and exchange can birth alternate systems. Jay Cumberland gives us an insight into how solutions city-dwellers are using, such as "the commons," are making shifts in urban contexts. Pamela Haines then provides an intimate portrait of how spiritually attuned organizing can shift fundamental dynamics of violent capitalism. The final two pieces suggest how we can all begin making adjustments in our own behavior to usher in this new world. Jennifer Rau and Jerry Koch-Gonzalez discuss how organizations and groups can move from coercive leadership to awakening equitable collaboration, while J. Tyson Casey and Christina Moon bring us all the way into our individual bodies with their discussion of how we can claim space and agency despite our embeddedness in systems that appear intractable.

After this section, you should have a sense of how this movement has manifested specific examples of the positive vision that *Tikkun* readers know we need. For more information about these developments, the people involved, and ideas of how to move your wealth into the new economy, I recommend looking into Movement Generation, the New Economy Coalition, RSF Social Finance, and the Southern Reparations Loan Fund. ■

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Coming Home

The New Economy and Honoring the Inherent Sacredness of All Life

MORDECAI COHEN ETTINGER, MA

As I write these words in Oakland, the day after Christmas 2017, the Thomas wildfire in Ventura County near Los Angeles has been burning for nearly a month. Finally 88% contained, this is the largest fire in California history and the second unprecedentedly catastrophic wildfire in the state in under two months. The air quality in the Bay Area has been significantly impacted. People with respiratory illnesses or other sensitivities have needed to wear their N95 masks again as they did during the Northern California fires, and the severity of asthma symptoms, especially in children, has ostensibly worsened.

A recent photo of Christmas trees decorated in what now resembles a vacant lot in Santa Rosa, placed by people marking where their homes used to be, is an indelible reminder of the tragedy, as are images of the loss and devastation caused by hurricanes Henry and Ira in the Southern U.S., Puerto Rico, and many places in the Caribbean.

For hundreds of millions of people, perhaps billions across the globe, natural disasters have brought home the inescapable fact that the world as we once knew it is truly gone. Words fail to approximate the extent to which there has never been a more crucial time to redesign our economy than now—life as we know it urgently depends on it. The ever expanding voraciousness of our current economy has eroded Earth's capacity to regulate our ecosystems. Thus, the urgency of climate change is extending its long, many-handed reach and knocking upon all our doors—except for those people from Santa Rosa to San Juan, Puerto Rico, who have lost homes upon which those doors once welcomed them. In the silence that now greets them, now is the time to co-create a new economy that is capable of sustaining rather than recklessly devouring life: this is the message that resounds.

In defining the vision of its Next Economy Program, the Movement Strategy Center, a Bay Area and national thought leader on these issues, states: "MSC's Next Economy program supports the transition to an economy based on interdependence, abundance, and regeneration. [The] Next Economy program focuses on discovering, building, and supporting what is feasible, scalable, and replicable, while staying rooted

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in the needs and interests of local communities. Our current global economic system is based on exploitation and profit maximization that sacrifices our most vulnerable communities as well as the natural world. We know that today, our communities face the worst of climate catastrophe and epic dislocation, the symptoms of a system in its last, most destructive phase. The current unsustainable system is melting down. Let's put something strong in its place."

As you read this issue, you will note that as our movements, institutions, and practices to transform capitalism as it currently functions emerge and grow, new language to describe these efforts is emerging. New economy, regenerative economy, next economy, socially conscious entrepreneurship, and impact investment are all terms which relate to and attempt to define these myriad interconnected and hopeful efforts.

The Community Capital Markets (COCAP) Conference: Building the We Economy, which has been organized for the last four years by Impact Hub Oakland, stands out as another local and national thought leader. The COCAP Conferences serve as a compass of where our movements have been and where we are heading in terms of the most progressive and cutting-edge regenerative economic efforts. The community-based (and much more affordable) alternative to the annual SOCAP (Social Capital Markets) gathering, the COCAP Conference focuses on "strategies for building local regenerative economies that create equity and well being for all." The leadership and needs of communities marginalized from finance, entrepreneurship, and wealth, especially communities of color and women, are centered.

A nondenominational spiritual exploration of who we all need to become individually and collectively to enable sustainable economic shift has also consistently been a central focus of the conference. COCAP is the brainchild of Konda Mason, the cofounder and founding CEO of Impact Hub Oakland and a long-time Buddhist teacher who sits on the Spirit Rock Board, and Jenny Kassan, cofounder of the Sustainable Economy Law Center and Force for Good Fund. The COCAP gatherings have historically proposed that spiritual exploration and the inner work it evokes is on par in importance to cultivating a grounded understanding of our material conditions in order to create alternative practices and institutions with an optimal potential for success and sustainability.

This year's COCAP conference opened with a talk with Konda Mason and Jenny Kassan on the Four Noble Truths of the Economy, followed by a keynote featuring Charles Eisenstein, the physicist-turned-writer whose widely known work explores changing the world narrative of domination and scarcity to one which centers on cooperation, connection, and a deep abiding recognition of spiritual wealth. Alongside local and national regenerative finance leaders and innovators such as Morgan Simon of the Candide Group, Pi Investments, and Transform Finance, as well as Rani Langer-Croager, cofounder of Uptima Business Accelerator, COCAP also featured Lama Tsomo, one of the few ordained American lamas in Tibetan Buddhism, and Rev. angel Kyodo williams, an ordained Zen priest and founder of the Center for Transformative Change. williams is also an expert in cryptocurrency and the economics of racialized capital. Nwamaka Agbo, Innovation Fellow and staff lead of the Movement Strategy Center's Next Economy program, was a keynote speaker of this and last year's conference as well.

It makes perfect sense that Agbo would play an essential role in the COCAP gathering. MSC's Next Economy program is grounded in over a decade of prior work in transformational leadership and spiritual activism. The MSC's 2010 report, *Coming Out of the Spiritual Closet,* based on interviews and work with hundreds of activists and organizers across the U.S., served as a bellwether (of what was at the time a new articulation) the secular radical Left's new commitment to honor the importance of inner personal transformation and healing. This was on par with the structural and policy work for change and justice activists and organizers do in the outer, material world. In fact, this new articulation envisioned these two processes as inextricable and always already mutually reinforcing, such that if activists, organizers, and change makers continued to overlook the importance of our personal and collective healing, then the change in our societies we were and are endeavoring to create could be severely undermined or even rendered impossible.

What has continued to emerge in the broader Left is an increasingly nuanced, interdisciplinary, and politicized understanding of trauma profoundly shaped and informed by psychologists, social scientists, and activists such as: Dr. Bonnie Duran, Dr. Eduardo Duran, Dr. Joyce DeGruy, Dr. Judith Herman, and Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, dating all the way back to the late 90s. Their findings and the demands of social movements such as Black Lives Matter and Indigenous Peoples' movements from Wounded Knee to Standing Rock that demand recognition and redress for the historical and ongoing trauma and harm of white supremacy, transatlantic slavery, and genocide are increasingly reinforced and supported by emergent findings in neuroscience and epigenetics. In this new light, trauma is consistently bound up in social conditions, and almost always mediated by social inequality and unredressed historical harms.

Deeply embedded within the need for a new economy is a call which sometimes eludes words: a call for a new and more nuanced integration of that which we understand as material and as spiritual—a spiritual materialism which can enable us to better envision and implement new economy practices and solutions and more broadly heal ourselves and our society. Up until now, the Western culture in which capitalism is rooted has perceived and organized our world in binaries, often opposing ones. In present time, everything from Indigenous cosmologies to string theory and complexity science,

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to the demands and growing culture of LBGTQ movements who increasingly center trans and gender nonbinary people, reflect an emergent consensus: binaries are illusive misperceptions and true Reality is better reflected through continuums, connections, and relationships. Just so, there can be no actual dis-integration of matter and spirit, nor conditions attributed as "purely" material.

Imagine, as an example, something as simple and commonplace and as complex as human emotion—something experienced but also often relegated to an abstraction—the not quite real and definitely immaterial. In fact, emotions are physiological phenomena taking shape and taking up very real space in our bodies through the firing of neural networks and the complex release of biochemicals pulsing through our bloodstream (in materially measurable levels), and landing in target tissues, the viscera of our bodies. A highly empathetic person, from the lens of neuroscience quite possibly a person with more highly active mirror neurons than average, will then truly feel this emotion in their own body, their neural networks firing in concert. New findings in epigenetics[1] reflect Western science's catching up to what has long been upheld in cross cultural ancestral wisdom: that we hold the pain of our ancestors in our bodies. Thought of in these terms, we are walking vessels of history, time travellers connecting the past with the present in our every breath, spinning webs of potential futures and not-so-distant pasts. If we are beings capable of embodying the past down to the cellular level, certainly our lived experiences are evidence of nonbinary, spiritually imbued interconnectedness. In their own ways, all of the thinkers, activists, and movements referenced above are asking of us: who do we have to become in order to create/cocreate the world we dream of? What does this new world look like and how can we build consensus around a shared implementable vision? What kind of movements, institutions, new practices, and counter-hegemonic or disruptive cultures do we need to cocreate? There is growing consensus that noncoercive (and often secular, but not always) reintegration of the Sacred and sacred interconnectedness, in individually and collectively espoused and embodied ways, is essential for humanity's path forward.

The emergent response of new economy movements to the core question of how a spiritual/material synthesis can best be theorized, such that a workable praxis emerges, strives to: 1) position in leadership those most impacted by the problem of racialized wealth inequality, which the new economy movement is striving to resolve and redress—following an intersectional[2] analysis, wealth inequality is also highly gendered and is an inequality rift further intensified by profound ableism and normalizing heteropatriarchy as well;[3, 4] and 2) address how to transition U.S. society on a massive scale away from extractive, exploitative, massively ecologically destructive economies to economies that generate abundance, especially for local communities, that fairly and without force redistribute wealth, and that honor and operationalize the sacredness of all life while respecting ecosystemic needs and limits. Cooperatives and worker-owned collectives have been increasingly taking center stage in new economy movement visioning and discussions, inviting us to reimagine and redesign what leadership means and really needs to look like as we create new economy institutions and practices. An inevitable question we must also ask is what inner work will be necessary, both on an individual and collective basis, to enable us to be capable of sustained, liberatory power-sharing that centers power with instead of over ways of being and relating.

While in the majority of banks, boardrooms, and financial institutions across the globe, or even in the living room of your average Bitcoin miner, a vision of a new spiritual/material synthesis based on liberatory social justice values is unlikely to be on their horizon. According to the Global Impact Investment Network's 2017 annual investor survey, the impact investment sector has $114 billion in investment assets. While it is not without its challenges and still relatively new, many social change leaders see potential for impact investment.[5]

In her new book, *Real Impact: The New Economics of Social Change,* Morgan Simon overviews three core principles of impact investing that direct the work of the organization: 1) Engage community in design, governance, and ownership. 2) Add more value than you extract. 3) Fairly balance risk and return among investors, entrepreneurs, and communities.

In order for us to more fully expand and participate in the emergent spiritual/material synthesis, which is coming to define new economy efforts and their viability—for our new economy movements to truly move—it is critical to recalibrate our inner individual and collective compass toward *real* value and that which is truly regenerative. Perhaps this recalibration itself is an essential process of this new synthesis and evidence of the strengthening of its unfolding.

If this is true, perhaps the most basic common denominator, yet one that allows for a high order of complexity and unity from both a radical secular and spiritually informed social justice perspective, is the premise of the Inherent Sacredness of All Life. What questions, concerns, and calls to action come into view and enter our hearts and minds when we strive to redefine value and reorder our social and economic world from this most basic, effortlessly intuitive yet tremendously powerful tenant?

Honoring the People Status of Nonhumans and the Planet. This call invites us to reimagine food security and sustainability, agriculture, and animal-human/human-land relationships. Extensive work is already being done to forward these efforts, often initiated by Indigenous people globally. In 2016, the Tre Urewera forest, the ancestral home of the Tuhoe people, was awarded legal personhood by New

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Zealand. In 2017, the Ganges River in India was granted human rights, and Ecuador's constitution recognized nature's right to integral respect. The Nonhuman Rights Project has been working for decades to secure rights for animals such as chimpanzees, dolphins, whales, and other animals widely held in captivity for research or human entertainment. While sweeping legislation, litigation, or activist campaigns may help people around the globe secure decisive wins, honoring the wholeness, holiness, and interconnectedness of all things can also be reflected in simple practices or rituals we engage in individually, or within our communities, secular or spiritual. Through small acts of mindfulness and massive collective action, we can honor all beings and the planet, and in so doing, begin to seed within ourselves the new capacities with which we can remake our world.

Honoring Ecosystemic Limits and Re-enshrining the Commons. This call invites us to deeply contemplate the commons, what is truly ours and what belongs to all of us. The commons are simply land or resources that belong to or affect a whole community. Historically, much of human society around the globe was organized around and honored some type of commons. Recognizing this invites us to think and feel in a manner which looks past our capitalist conditioning and the normalization of private ownership accessible to fewer and fewer people and to look back to how humans have historically lived on the planet—and the ways many indigenous people are fighting to sustain themselves internationally. The massive seizure of the European commons enabled exploitative capitalist accumulation that led to industrialization and the ongoing brutal dispossession of Indigenous land globally.

Is it possible to reestablish the commons? The Shumacher Center for New Economics's Reinventing the Commons combines research and practical application of examples of renewing commons land use, local currencies, and plans for "commoning" economic practices and resources upon which we all depend. The slow economic movement attempts to re-factor the value of the commons into economic measurements. Local land trusts and the creation of locally or cooperatively owned banks and businesses all demonstrate increasingly coordinated efforts to reimagine and reestablish the commons worldwide. Practices and institutions that focus on nuturing regenerative economies and collective ownership help us reconnect to a sacred calling of collective responsibility, a spiritual competency largely eroded in us by capitalist conditioning of rugged individualism and false entitlement, that we need to regain so a just and sustainable future can be possible. This leads us to our next essential calling.

Understanding and Calculating True Costs and True Value. In our current highly globalized socioeconomic context, it has been rendered nearly impossible to discern, let alone reliably calculate true costs or understand true value. There is currently no economic metric to measure or account for topsoil loss, soil nutrient depletion, or watershed pollution and salination associated with large-scale monocrop agriculture and the globally widespread use of pesticides and herbicides. Nor is there a metric to measure the cost of habitat destruction, massive species die-off, and massive displacement of peoples from ancestrally held lands.

Similarly, a person (narrowly defined as a "consumer," which is inherently dehumanizing but so commonplace in neoliberal economic parlance that it is not widely recognized as such) has few ways of ascertaining how much of the costs of the products they purchase go to the workers who created the product in question, to the communities in which the product was created or the regions from which the nonhuman resources used to make the products originated. For example, in mid-November of 2017, the labor exploitation of Zara, a company owned by Iditex—worth well over 100 billion dollars—went viral when workers from their Bravo Tekstil factory in Istanbul stitched pleas for help into the clothing they made. Apple manufacturer Foxconn's Longhua plant, located in Shenzhen, China, periodically makes the news when its deplorable conditions drive workers to suicide by jumping out of the building. In the latest such incident in June of 2017, Foxconn has responded by surrounding the factory with netting and reportedly chaining its workers to their chairs.

In the U.S., a California elementary teacher makes a median hourly salary of $38. A Registered Nurse makes $46.88, and a divorce attorney makes $250-$450 per hour. What accounts for this vast differential? Perhaps some may argue that attorneys are encumbered with higher education costs than either RNs or teachers, but can educational costs satisfactorily account for such an enormous disparity in remuneration across the entire span of a person's often 40-plus-year career? Similarly, for labor for which a white man earns one dollar, white women earn 76 cents per dollar, and Black and Latina women earn 34–55 cents per dollar—this is quite frankly a *shanda*, which demonstrates that while meticulously quantifiable, money is also a symbol for value, one which is polluted and controlled by and entangled with overlapping systems of oppressions and historicities.

How can costs more accurately enable us to steward and replenish whole ecosystems and adequately honor and remunerate the labor of *all* people, especially those people whose labor is most extracted, across vast geographies, supply chains, and disparate professions?

We need a new calculus of value, one that recognizes the incalculable anguish of exploitation and systematic theft and venerates the immeasurable inherent value of justice and life itself. Impact investors and socially conscious entrepreneurs are making strides to operationalize this new calculus. However, by the very virtue of its immeasurability, we will not be able to fully approximate the value of the sacredness of life,

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fairness, justice, equity, or of the imperative of healing on balance sheets or investment criteria.

Although we should certainly demand to see our collective sacredness and infinite inherent value evidenced in the equalization of our paychecks from Oakland to Shenzen, we can also engage in the prefigurative practice of radical kindness and gentleness. I speak of a type of gentleness that opens us to understanding, humility, and nondefensiveness, and enables us to hold one another in compassionate, respectful witness across race, class, sex, gender, age, ability, and even political spectrum—though I am not endorsing any fireside chats with espoused fascists, so rest easy if you feared this is what I am recommending! In so doing, I believe we cultivate a liberatory zone within ourselves—impervious to the disparagement and shaming which is a toxically masculine reaction to kindness and compassion—and which enables us to begin to leverage the capacity to undo the unspeakable damage of the normalization of oppression and suffering as "business as usual" at the micro level of our relationships to others, and ultimately at the macro level of how we reimagine and remake our world.

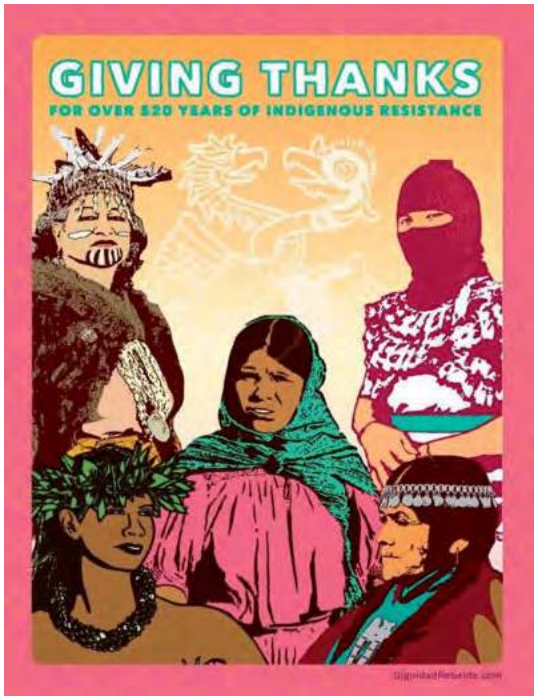
Reparations and Land Transfer. It will not be possible to heed or achieve any of the above calls for authentic contemplation and action without further examining from where, what, or whom value is derived, how it is derived and how wealth accumulates. In the U.S. context, though the answers to these questions are obscured, they are starkly and painfully obvious: the source of wealth derives from and has accumulated as a consequence of Transatlantic slavery and the massive dispossession of land and genocide of Native American people.

Just as the air that I am breathing as I type these words—polluted as it may be from the fires to the south—could not fill my lungs without the trees from generations ago that spawned the seedlings that now inhabit the redwood forest near my Oakland home—or in the language of the Ohlone People, Huichiun—I would be homeless if not for the Ohlone land upon which my home was built. Nor would I have the shirt on my back, made of cotton by a process of mass production quite literally made possible by the 'innovations' of the enslaved labor of Black Americans.

If it is hard to imagine, the numbers paint a bleak yet clear picture. Ta-Nehisi Coates's harrowing 2014 essay "Slavery Made America," reports that "by 1860, there were more millionaires (slaveholders all) living in the lower Mississippi Valley than anywhere else in the United States. In the same year, the nearly 4 million American slaves were worth some $3.5 billion, making them the largest single financial asset in the entire U.S. economy, worth more than all manufacturing and railroads combined." These numbers are staggering, as is the value of the land seized from Native Americans. Under our current economic conditions, the land for any enterprise is the root of much of the value derived. The cumulative wealth of so-called real estate moguls, such as Trump, is frequently what lands them at the top of the world's richest lists. However, the biggest price tag is the all too invisibilized human cost of the ineffable and unredressed trauma of Native American people due to displacement, near cultural decimation, rampant cultural appropriation, and persistent denial of the real historical harms Native American people have faced and continue to face. To paraphrase what Gandhi famously stated, when we share sorrow it diminishes, and when we share joy it increases. Once the vast mourning of Black Americans and Native Americans becomes our collective mourning, then we will have begun in earnest one of the greatest spiritual tasks facing all Americans and perhaps all humanity.

There are many ways to put spirit into action. As in other areas of the new economy, there is compelling and inspiring work being done around reparations. In September 2016, the United Nations' Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent published a report recommending reparations for African Americans. The national Black Lives Matter movement has issued a platform that articulates clear reasoning for reparations, and how they may be implemented. The Sogorea Te' Land Trust, an Indigenous women–led organization based in California's East Bay, is offering people the opportunity to turn their privately owned land into land trusts which can be deeded back to the Ohlone people or for people to tithe voluntary property taxes to the Ohlone people.[6]

What would it take for us to generate the collective will to make it commonsense and common practice to transfer privately owned land to Native American people, to restore



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place names to those which graced the tongues of the Indigenous Elders, and for us to engage in widespread voluntary reparations for Black people? With increasing excitement and enthusiasm for the restoration of the commons, impact investment, and other forward-looking new economy ideas, reparations and land transfer must not be left out; they are arguably the surest and most crucial collective practices we can engage in to heal our collective Soul. Sometimes the best place to begin is by asking the right questions at the right time for the right reasons—the heart of *kismet,* and perhaps *teshuvah* and *tikkun olam*—by asking how how how . . . and holding space for the answers to emerge.

Leading With and Leading Together. In her 1989 book *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery,*[7] Starhawk, the widely known feminist thinker and pagan Jewish witch, describes three types of power: power over, or domination and control; power from within, or the power to create and connect; and the power to act from a place of one's truth and inner calling and to call upon others to join authentically and in their own power. Our current administration, the #MeToo revelations, the upsurge of police murders of Black and Brown people, and violence against so many communities, especially transgender women of color, Muslims, and Jews, reflect the crisis of power we are in—domination, control, coercion permeate every aspect of our lives. I fear these "power-over" strategies of power and the toxicity of dominion have become so habituated, especially by people raised as men, that they have come to supplant in our collective psyche and imagination the other ways we can embody and use our power to connect and cocreate, to act from our deepest sense of truth and call upon and call-in others.

Part of leading with and leading together necessarily involves holding space for the inner work that will allow us to expand into new experiences of empowerment. Experiences of cocreation fill us with the sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that is currently reserved for solo accomplishment in today's society. The idea of solo accomplishment itself is an impossible myth rooted in bootstrappism that leads to and has justified systematic theft of marginalized people. This does not mean in our futures we will cease to have or to honor autonomy or autonomous achievement; we will simply get better at understanding how we are always already an invaluable *and* small expression of an inextricably interconnected whole. I believe the Baal Shem Tov said it best: "we are nothing but a speck of dust," and "all the world is created for you."

There are many beautiful experiments in Next Economy cooperatives, collectives, and prefigurative ways of being. Cooperation Jackson[8] in Jackson, Mississippi, and the Ujima Project[9] in Boston, Massachusetts are two such innovative and exciting examples. Both projects strive to redress the economic violence and historical trauma faced by communities of color and low-income communities through locally rooted, collectivized leadership and economic models. Sins Invalid,[10] an award-winning arts organization centering the leadership of disabled LBGTQ people of color and a national thought leader in disability justice, created a disability justice primer in 2016 entitled *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Our Movement Is Our People.*[11] A profound and resonant guide, this work outlines ten principles of disability justice that are widely applicable to all justice-loving, compassionate people. One of the ten core principles espoused in the primer is the prefigurative practice of interdependence: "we attempt to meet each other's needs as we move towards liberation without always reaching for state solutions which then inevitably extend its control further over our lives." This vision for a new form of interdependence calls upon our power from within and our power to create and lead together towards new future and possibilities.

Ultimately, this is the Left's best defense against the perils of fascism, a country and world of ever-increasing dystopian class divide, and the risk of further ecological devastation: to dream boldly and take bold action for a world in which all life is honored as inherently sacred, inextricably connected, and power takes new shape within us and among us . . . she is Our World and she is calling us home; we have but to answer the call. ■

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Notes

1. Rachel Yehuda, "How Trauma and Resilience Crosses Generations," On Being, November 9, 2107. https://onbeing.org/programs/rachel-yehuda-how-trauma-and-resilience-cross-generations-nov2017/.

2. Intersectional theory, created by Kimberle' Creshaw, a law professor at UCLA, is the study of how overlapping or intersecting social identities, particularly marginalized identities, relate to systems and structures of oppression, domination, or discrimination. Crenshaw introduced the theory of intersectionality to Black feminism in the late 1980s. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kimberl%C3%A9_Williams_Crenshaw#cite_note-:2-2 (accessed January 5, 2018).

3. According to the National Center for Transgender Equality's 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS), 29% of transgender people live in poverty, compared to 12% in the general population. The USTS is the largest survey examining the experiences of transgender people in the United States, with 27,715 respondents from all fifty states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and U.S. military bases overseas. See "2015 U.S. Transgender Survey Executive Summary," December 2016. https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Executive-Summary-Dec17.pdf.

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Post-capitalist/Post-socialist Economics

In our time of unprecedented economic, social, technological, and environmental change, awareness of the need for new economic thinking is growing. Yet most government and business policies are still made looking through a rearview mirror.

This article outlines a new post-capitalist and post-socialist economic system. It describes building blocks for a new economics of *partnerism* that recognizes that our real wealth consists of the contributions of people and of nature. It demonstrates that to move toward a more sustainable and just system we must implement economic measurements, policies, and practices that recognize the enormous value of the essential work of caring for people, starting in early childhood, and caring for our natural life-support systems.

The Old Economic Paradigms

Most current proposals for a new economics are still framed in terms of the debate between capitalism and socialism—even though both came out of early industrial times (the 1700s and 1800s), and we are now well into the 21st-century postindustrial era. On that account alone, both these economic paradigms are antiquated.

But the problem is even deeper. Both these economic systems came out of times when kings, emperors, sheiks, pashas, and other potentates ruled in states and tribes. These were also times when by both law and custom men ruled the women and children in their families. In other words, both these economic systems came out of times when top-down familial, social, political, and economic rankings were still the norm. And so also was the use of fear and violence to maintain these rankings.

Capitalism and socialism were actually attempts to challenge top-down economic control.[1] But to varying degrees both theories reflected this, perpetuated it.

Adam Smith proposed replacing royal/state economic monopolies with the "invisible hand of the market." But his capitalist economic theory still relied on inequality (the class structure), emphasized individual acquisitiveness and greed (the profit motive), and failed to address the use of violence to protect this new form of top-down economics.

Marx challenged unregulated capitalism and its reconcentration of economic resources in the hands of industrialists and merchants. Though his theory of scientific socialism argued that the abolition of private property would eventually emancipate society from all exploitation, oppression, and class distinction, his "dictatorship of the proletariat" (a state ruled by the proletariat or workers rather than the bourgeois or propertied class) followed the familiar formula of oppressor and oppressed trading places—that is, yet another version of top-down control.

These economic theories also reflected another established tradition of top-down rule. Neither challenged the then prevailing belief that women should work for free within households, where their labor, as well as all family income and economic resources, are under male control.

Marx and Engels argued that the abolition of private property would lead to women no longer being dependent on the male "head of household." But they did not challenge this headship, which basically put women in the position of an unpaid employee or indentured servant.

Indeed, when Smith and Marx formulated their theories, the work that women performed both inside and outside

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households was by law and custom their husbands' property. As late as the close of the 19th century, in most U.S. states a woman could not even sue for injuries inflicted on her. Only her husband could sue, on the grounds that his wife's injuries had deprived him of her services, which were legally his due.[2]

It should therefore not surprise us that neither Smith nor Marx was interested in changing the exploitation of women's work in male-controlled households or the use of fear and violence to maintain this control. Nor, for that matter, did their theories address the critical issue of how resources are distributed within families and how this affects all family members, especially the nutrition and education of children—which must be considered as part of a more equitable and sustainable economics.[3]

Hence, it should also not surprise us that both Marx's and Smith's theories devalued the "women's work" of caring for people, starting in early childhood. For both, this was merely "reproductive" rather than "productive" labor—a classification still perpetuated in economics texts and courses to this day.

Moreover, neither Smith nor Marx considered the "women's work" of keeping a clean and healthy home environment important in their theoretical frameworks. In fact, both failed to give any value to the work of caring for our Mother Earth; for both, nature was there to be exploited. In short, caring for our natural life-support system is not part of either capitalist or socialist theory.[4]

It should therefore also not surprise us that the real-life applications of these theories led to the despoliation and destruction of our natural life-support system we see all around us. The damage done by capitalism was extensively reported in a recent study by thirteen U.S. government agencies.[5] The two major applications of socialism, in the former Soviet Union and China, fared no better, leading to environmental disasters such as the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe, the virtual destruction of Lake Baikal, and the life-threatening air pollution of Beijing and other Chinese cities.

In sum, in our time, when the scientific consensus is that climate change is leading our planet in an unsustainable direction, neither capitalism nor socialism can meet our environmental challenges. Nor can either economic system effectively address the injustices of the gap between those on top and those on bottom.

I saw these injustices firsthand when I visited the former Soviet Union. Caviar and champagne were served to Soviet elites, while the mass of people stood in lines for hours for the most basic necessities. According to recent reports, China today tops the United States in the number of its billionaires. As for capitalism, it is notorious for its misdistribution of resources to those on top, a problem that has increased in recent years when the heads of U.S. companies earn over 300 times what workers do. Poverty also persists under both systems, as we see today, not only in China

but also in the United States, which has the highest child-poverty rates of any developed nation.[6]

While capitalism brought an expanding middle class and socialism somewhat mitigated extreme poverty in China and the USSR, the many failures of both systems have led some people to believe there is no hope for us. But there is another way, the way of *partnerism*, which has been emerging in nations such as Sweden, Norway, and Finland. These are *not* social democracies, a term Hitler used to describe his regime in Nazi Germany. What they often call themselves is *caring societies*. And, as I will develop in this article, they have been moving toward a *caring economics*.

A Whole Systems Analysis

To understand why an economic system does or does not pay attention to caring for people and nature, we have to look at its larger social context. In doing this, I again ask you to analyze societies from a new perspective. This perspective requires leaving our comfort zone of familiar social categories—Right/Left, religious/secular, Eastern/Western, Southern/Northern, industrial/pre- or postindustrial—and instead use the new categories of the *domination system* and the *partnership system*. Or rather, because no society is a pure partnership or domination system, we will look at where a society falls on the *partnership/domination social scale*.[7]

Let's start with capitalism. Certainly capitalism has, during the last two hundred years, been linked with imperialism. But earlier noncapitalist domination-oriented societies, be they European like Belgium, the Netherlands, and Great Britain, or Eastern like the Mongolians, Chinese, and Ottomans, were also exploitive imperial powers.

From the new perspective of the partnership/domination social scale, we can further see that neoliberalism too is *not*

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a new capitalist phenomenon: it is a regression to an *economics of domination*. "Trickle-down economics" is just another version of old traditions of economic domination where, as in feudal times, those on the bottom are socialized to content themselves with the scraps dropping from the opulent tables of those on top. In other words, what we are dealing with is one more version of an ancient economics of top-down domination, whether it is tribal, feudal, or mercantilist, Eastern or Western, ancient or modern, capitalist or socialist.

This economics of domination did not arise in a vacuum. It is embedded in the *social configuration of domination systems*.

We see this domination configuration in the most repressive and violent societies of modern times—be they secular like Hitler's rightist Germany and Kim Jong-Un's leftist North Korea, or religious like Khomeini's Iran, ISIS, the Taliban, and the rightist so-called Christian fundamentalist alliance in the U.S. that would turn us into a theocracy. *First*, all have an authoritarian structure in *both* the family and the state or tribe. *Second*, the male half of humanity is ranked over the female half, and with this comes a *gendered system of values* in which anything associated with masculinity in domination systems (e.g., conquest and violence) is deemed superior to the stereotypically feminine (e.g., nonviolence and caring). *Third*, abuse and violence are built into the system (from child and wife beating, to pogroms, lynchings, and aggressive warfare), since they are needed to maintain rigid top-down rankings: man over man, man over woman, race over race, religion over religion, tribe over tribe, or nation over nation.

In more equitable and peaceful partnership-oriented societies, we see a very different configuration. *First*, both families and tribes or nations are more democratic and egalitarian. There are still parents, teachers, managers, and leaders, but they exercise power through *hierarchies of actualization* where accountability, respect, and benefits flow both ways rather than just from the bottom up, and power is empowering rather than, as in *hierarchies of domination,* disempowering. *Second*, equal value is given to both the female and male halves of humanity, and in contrast to the rigid gender stereotypes of the domination system, qualities such as nonviolence and care are valued in both women and men as well as in social and economic policy. *Third*, while there is some abuse and violence, they do not have to be built into social institutions, as they are not required to maintain rigid rankings of domination.

Again, societies orienting to the partnership system's configuration transcend familiar social categories. For example, they can be technologically undeveloped foraging societies, as documented by the research of anthropologist Douglas Fry and others.[8] As shown by archeological excavations, they can be egalitarian prehistoric farming cultures like Catal Huyuk, where there are no signs of destruction though warfare for 1000 years and no signs of inequality between women and men. They can be technologically advanced "high civilizations" like Minoan Crete, where women played leading roles, there was a generally high standard of living, and there are no signs of warfare between the various city-states on the island. They can be modern societies like Sweden, Norway, and Finland, to which I will return.

But here I want to stay with the need to leave behind our familiar social and economic categories, and look at our past, present, and the possibilities for our future through the lens of the partnership/domination social scale.

To begin with, societies in all the conventional categories have been authoritarian, violent, and unjust. This is the case for not only capitalist societies but also socialist ones, as we see in the despotic and violent character of the former Soviet Union and China. It is also the case for secular rightist societies, such as contemporary Latin American juntas, and secular leftist ones, such as today's North Korea, as well as for religious ones, as shown by religious fundamentalist regimes such as ISIS and the Taliban.

Additionally, and this is a critical point, these old categories do *not* describe a crucial aspect of social systems: the cultural construction of parent-child and gender relations. This is a major deficiency because parent-child and gender relations are the relations children first experience and observe in their families, and psychology and neuroscience show that these early experiences and observations profoundly affect how our brains develop, and therefore how people feel, think, and act—including what they consider normal and moral.

The social construction of domination or partnership systems plays a key role in shaping whether a society is more just or unjust, more peaceful or violent, and whether it protects human rights or considers chronic human rights violations normal, even moral.

Shifting from Domination to Partnership

Domination systems have caused enormous suffering and injustice, and the legacy we carry from earlier times that is oriented more closely to the domination side of the social scale continues to cause great suffering and injustice.

But there has also been movement toward the partnership side of the partnership/domination social scale. If we look at modern history from this new perspective, we see that every progressive social movement has challenged entrenched traditions of domination. The 18th-century "rights of man" movement challenged the supposedly divinely ordained right of kings to rule their "subjects." The feminist movement challenged the supposedly divinely ordained right of men to rule the women and children in the "castles" (a military term) of their homes. The 19th- and 20th-century abolitionist, civil rights, and anticolonial movements challenged the divinely

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ordained right of a supposedly "superior" race to rule over "inferior" ones. The 19th-, 20th-, and 21st-century peace movements and the more recent movement to end traditions of violence in families challenge the use of fear and force to maintain domination in these relations. The environmental movement challenges another tradition of domination: the once hallowed conquest of nature, which at our level of technological development could take us to an evolutionary dead end.

So, at least in some world regions, there has been some progress in leaving behind traditions of domination. Just a few hundred years ago, the European Middle Ages still oriented very closely to the domination side of the social scale. While there were some partnership elements, with its Inquisition (where you would get tortured and killed for any deviation from official thinking), its Crusades (holy wars), and its witch-burnings (where by conservative estimates 100,000 women were tortured and killed, a huge number considering the low European population of that time), this period had much in common with today's Taliban and ISIS. Women had no rights, children had no rights-in fact, the idea of human rights would have been considered insane. So also would any challenge to the established order of rigid top-down rankings. As St. Augustine famously declared, for anyone to even think of changing their station in life was like a nose wanting to be an eye.

Yet our forward movement has not been linear, it has been more like an upward spiral with dips. Not only has it been fiercely resisted every inch of the way; it has also been punctuated by massive regressions to the domination side of the social scale. I was born into a brutal domination regression when the Nazis came to power in my native Austria, and we are in a regression today in the United States and in other world regions.

A major reason for these regressions is that most of the energy and resources of the modern progressive movements I just mentioned have focused on dismantling the top of the domination pyramid: politics and economics as conventionally defined. Far less attention has been given to changing traditions of domination and violence in our primary human relations: our parent-child and gender relations. Yet, as we know from neuroscience, what children experience and observe in their early years affects nothing less than how our brains develop. It is on these foundations that domination systems have kept rebuilding themselves in different forms, whether secular or religious, Eastern or Western, and so on.

Once we understand these psychosocial dynamics, we can more effectively work to change what is happening right now in the United States. We can see something I have closely studied: that those in the United States pushing us back to more authoritarianism, violence, and in-group versus outgroup scapegoating have, for decades, invested enormous resources and energy in maintaining or reinstating the domination character of four interconnected cornerstones for domination systems: family and childhood relations (appropriating family, values, and morality); gender relations (demonizing same-gender partnership), economics (promoting trickle-down economics), and narratives that justify top-down control (like claiming that the only good family is one in which the father is master of the house). We can see that they were extraordinarily successful in this effort, which is one of the foundations for accepting strongman rule in the state. Polls show that from 1992 to 2004, the percent of Americans who agreed that "the father of the family is master of the house" jumped from 42 percent to 52 percent.

We further see that the current scapegoating of African-Americans and immigrants, misogyny, machismo, and the idealization of "strongman" rule in *both* the family and the state are not disconnected. They are all elements of a regression to top-down family, political, and economic rule—in other words, a regression to the domination side of the social scale.

Connecting the Dots

While most progressives still marginalize gender and parent-child relations as "just" women's and children's issues, those pushing us back pay great attention to either maintaining or reinstating traditions of domination in our family and gender relations.

If we are to counter regressions to domination worldwide and build a more equitable and caring socioeconomic system, progressives, too, must have a systemic, fully integrated social and political agenda. We must take into account that if children grow up in cultures or subcultures where economic injustice and even violence in families are accepted as normal and moral, they learn basic lessons that support domination systems. While not everyone growing up in these settings accepts these lessons, as we see all around us, many people do.

One basic lesson children learn in domination families is to equate difference, beginning with the most fundamental difference in our species between male and female, with either superiority or inferiority, dominating or being dominated, being served or serving. This lesson is particularly relevant to economics, as it provides a model of inequality in human relations that children internalize. Long before their critical faculties are developed, children learn that it is normal and moral for one kind of person to serve and another kind to be served—a model they can then apply to other differences, whether based on race, religion, or ethnicity.

As noted earlier, in the more rigid domination systems we have struggled to leave behind, women and their labor were male property. Their life-sustaining activities, like those of nature, were simply there to be exploited by the "superior" male half of the species. That was obviously very bad for women; but it was also very bad for men. Along with the

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subordination and devaluation of the female half of humanity came a gendered system of values in which anything associated with women or the "feminine"—like the essential work of caring for people and keeping a clean and healthy environment—was also subordinated and devalued. As long as caring is devalued, we cannot realistically expect more caring policies.

We would not have global warming, we would not have such huge investments in weapons and wars, we would not have so much poverty, hunger, and misery worldwide, if we had an economic system that recognized the enormous value of caring for people and for nature.

I realize that when people first hear caring and economics in the same sentence, many do a double take. But think about what a terrible comment that is on how we have been conditioned to accept that uncaring values should drive economic systems.

Today, when climate change threatens our life-support systems, it is more essential than ever that we support the work of caring for nature. The same is true for supporting the work of caring for people.

In fact, we can make a purely financial case for recognizing the value of the work of caring for people, starting in early childhood. As we move into the postindustrial age, when automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence have already replaced many jobs and are predicted to continue to do so at an exponential rate, a time when economists tell us that the most important capital is what they call "high-quality human capital," it is economically essential that we support the work of caring for people, starting in early childhood. The reason, as we know from neuroscience, is that whether or not our human capacities develop largely hinges on the quality of care and education children receive early on.

Steps Toward a Caring Economics

Moving beyond the old argument about socialism versus capitalism, and vice versa, does not mean leaving everything from these old economic paradigms behind. We must strengthen the partnership elements in both the market and government economies and leave their domination elements behind. But we must go further to a new economic system that recognizes what these two old systems do not: that the real wealth of nations consists of the contributions of people and of nature.

My book, *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics*, outlines key components of the new economics of partnerism, as well as building blocks for its construction. I want to briefly describe five of these.

1. A first step toward partnerism is changing how we measure economic health. Currently policymakers heavily rely on GDP/GNP. These measures, developed almost one hundred years ago, include as "productive" many activities that harm and destroy life (e.g., selling cigarettes and the resulting medical and funeral costs). They do not subtract "externalities" (e.g., costs of natural disasters produced by climate change, instead adding to GDP the expenses of cleaning up and rebuilding). And they fail to include as "productive" the work of caring for people in households, despite studies showing that if the value of this work were counted, it would constitute between 30 to 50 percent of the reported GDP.[10]

As a response to the need for more accurate and forward-looking metrics to guide policymakers, the Center for Partnership Studies' Caring Economy Campaign (http://www.caringeconomy.org) together with a group of prominent economists developed the first iteration of Social Wealth Economic Indicators (SWEIs). SWEIs demonstrate the economic value of the work of caring for people and nature, the benefits of investing in it, and the costs of not doing so.

Social Wealth Economic Indicators measure two interconnected factors. The first is the state of a nation's *human capacity development*, as shown by data such as child poverty rates, enrollment in early childhood education, gender and racial equity, educational attainment, and ecological deficit/returns. The second is a nation's *care investment*; for example, public spending on family benefits, funding for childcare and education, and government and business investment in environmental protection.

By measuring both inputs (investments) and outputs (where a society stands), unlike other "GDP alternatives" that only provide a snapshot of current conditions, SWEIs further show that outputs (human capacity development) are heavily dependent on inputs (care investment). For example, there is a connection between the fact that the United States has the highest child poverty rates of any major developed nation and that it invests the least in early childhood education and support for childcare in families.

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The use of SWEIs in policy-making has been proposed to the Democratic Party of New Mexico in the resolution "Prioritizing Support for and Reliance on Social Wealth Economic Indicators when Developing Policies to Reduce Poverty and Economic Exploitation." This resolution, submitted by Edith Copeland, an alumna of CPS's Caring Economy Advocates Program, is available for use and/or adaptation at www.caringeconomy.org.

Partnerism and a Guaranteed Income

In response to the growing loss of jobs to automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence, and predictions that millions more jobs will soon disappear, a no-strings-attached universal income has been proposed.

This approach, however, ignores that people need meaningful work. This is dramatically shown by Nicholas Eberstadt in "The Idle Army: America's Unworking Men," based on Time-Use studies of what the over ten million men who have already dropped out of the U.S. workforce do with their free time.

What this article reports is that the overwhelming majority of these "unworking men" are almost entirely idle. They help out around the house less than employed men. They care for others less than employed women. They volunteer and engage in religious activities less than working men and women or unemployed men. In fact, for most of them, "socializing, relaxing and leisure" is a full-time occupation, accounting for 3,000 hours a year, much of this time in front of television or computer screens."

The article does not mention a guaranteed income. But what it tells us about just handing out money without linking it to need and/or making a meaningful contribution is dismal. Nor does it raise other serious issues: what will millions of young men do if they are just handed out money? Will violence increase? What about their mental health? What about increased alcohol and drug use? What will be the costs to society?

These issues are addressed in *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics*, which proposes that a guaranteed income should be linked to caring for people and nature in households and other nonmarket sectors of the economy. A number of other thinkers are also proposing that a guaranteed income be linked to care work in homes; for example, Tufts University economist Neva Goodwin details such a plan in her article in the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*, "Core Support for the New Economy."

2. A second step toward partnerism is demonstrating that ending the devaluation of care work is essential to cut through seemingly intractable cycles of poverty. Again, the Caring Economy Campaign provides activists and policymakers with resources such as Social Wealth Economic Indicators, as well as webinars and online courses to do this.

These resources highlight the need for high-quality early childcare and education, and the enormous long-term costs of not investing in policies that support these—from intergenerational patterns of poverty linked to low levels of human-capacity development, to crime and the attendant prison, court, and other taxpayer-supported costs. They also take into account that worldwide, women are the mass of the poor and the poorest of the poor, and that even in our wealthy United States, according to U.S. Census Bureau figures, women over the age of 65 are twice as likely to live in poverty as men of the same age. This poverty is due not only to job discrimination but also to the devaluation of care work: most of these women are or were either full- or part-time caregivers.

3. A third step toward partnerism is developing a cohesive family policy so progressives can reclaim family values and morality from their hijacking by regressives. To this end, the Center for Partnership Studies developed the "Family Security Agenda" designed to appeal to both "liberal" and "conservative" voters.

The Family Security Agenda focuses on reducing family stress, cutting through cycles of poverty, and producing the "high-quality human capital" needed for the new postindustrial age. Its provisions include support for the care work done for free in families (such as childcare, elder care, and increasingly, both), which are a major source of economic and psychological stress, especially to middle-class and low-income U.S. families. It includes policies to raise the wages of caregivers, which are so low that many have to turn to welfare. It proposes policies that make effective education a priority, starting with affordable high-quality early childhood education.

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In addition, the Family Security Agenda identifies funding sources for its provisions by taxing and/or penalizing activities that are harmful or useless to our nation's well-being. These include closing the carried-interest loophole, enacting luxury goods purchase taxes, taxing very short-term stock market transactions, and increasing civil penalties for businesses that engage in activities that harm people and nature.

4. A fourth step toward partnerism is providing evidence that investing in the work of caring for people and nature is profitable for both businesses and nations. The Caring Economy Campaign shows how businesses that have parental leave, sick leave, flex time, and other caring policies have a higher yield to investors. It also shows that these policies provide nations with a path to an equitable and thriving economy.

As detailed in *The Real Wealth of Nations*, caring policies were a major factor in the economic transformation of nations that in the early 20th century were so poor there were famines. These are the nations I referred to earlier—Sweden, Norway, and Finland—which today have very low poverty and crime rates and a generally high standard of living for all.

These countries pioneered generous paid parental leave for both mothers and fathers, stipends to help families raise children, elder care with dignity, universal healthcare, quality childcare, and other caring policies. In addition, they have been in the forefront of moving toward renewable energy and other policies that recognize the necessity of caring for nature.

Contrary to popular beliefs—and I want to emphasize this—the reason these nations invest more in caring for people and nature is *not* that they are small and relatively homogeneous. There are also nations that are small and relatively homogeneous that are far from being caring societies. For example, Saudi Arabia is an authoritarian theocracy of top-down control in both the family and state, rigid male dominance, and entrenched traditions of violence, from stoning women accused of sexual independence to cutting off hands and/or heads in public exhibitions of brutal violence. There is also a huge wealth gap in Saudi Arabia between those on top and on the bottom, with a large underclass of menial workers from other Arab nations who have little- if any- social or economic protection.

So what really lies behind the more caring policies of nations such as Sweden, Finland, and Norway is something else: their movement toward the partnership side of the partnership-domination social scale.

5. This takes us to a fifth and essential step toward an economics of partnerism: the recognition that economic systems are affected by, and in turn affect, the larger social system in which they are embedded.

We see this interconnection if we look at what happened in Sweden, Norway, and Finland from the perspective of the three core components of societies that orient toward the partnership side or the domination side of the partnership/domination social scale.

First, these more equitable nations paid particular attention to family and childhood relations. For example, in addition to the caring policies to help families and children mentioned above, they pioneered legislation that makes it against the law to physically discipline children in families, which is considered normal and moral in domination systems.

Second, these nations are at the forefront of the move toward gender equity in both the family and the state. They have the lowest gender gaps in the world, and women are about half the national legislatures. But it is not only women who voted for caring policies. As the status of women rises, so also do "feminine" values and activities. In other words, as women and the feminine are no longer culturally devalued, men too can embrace "soft" values and activities as part of their "masculinity," rather than conforming to the dominator maxim that "real men" can never be like "inferior" women.

Third, these nations have been in the forefront of trying to leave behind traditions of violence. In addition to their laws against violence against children in families, they pioneered the first peace studies programs. And, since it is in early family relations that children first learn whether or not it is okay to use violence to impose one's will on others, nonviolence in families and in the family of nations are inextricably interconnected.[11]

Conclusion

We cannot meet our unprecedented environmental, economic, and social challenges with the same thinking that created them. The mix of high technology and domination systems is causing terrible damage. On top of this, there is a massive regression to uncaring policies and practices. This makes the need for an economic system that, unlike capitalism and socialism, recognizes and rewards the essential work of caring for nature and for people more urgent than ever before.

Our current technological dislocations are a crisis. But they are also an opportunity to develop the new economic paradigm of partnerism.

We are rapidly approaching an economic tipping point. Millions of jobs have already been replaced by automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence, and predictions are that job losses will accelerate exponentially in the next 20 years. This opens the door for redefining what is, and is not, productive work as part of a new, more sustainable and equitable economic system.

The good news is that we do not have to start from square one. There are already millions of individuals and organizations all over the world working to shift to a healthier and more caring economic system.

What has been missing is an integrated progressive social

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and economic agenda that no longer devalues women and the "soft" or stereotypically feminine like caring and caregiving, focuses on children, and provides us with the new language/conceptual frames of partnership systems, domination systems, partnerism, and caring economics.

Together we can create and implement this agenda. What distinguishes us as humans is our enormous capacity for consciousness, caring, and creativity. We must use these gifts to construct the new caring economics of partnerism, beginning with the five building blocks described above: new metrics; ending the disproportionate poverty of women and children; implementing a cohesive family policy agenda; demonstrating the economic return from investing in caring for people and nature; and working together to shift social institutions and values from domination to partnership.

This is a long-term venture, and it will not be easy or quick. But if we are to have a more sustainable and equitable future, perhaps even a future at all, we must join together in this essential enterprise—starting right now. ■

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The Tikkun Institute is the research and theory/public policy development arm of the Tikkun community. It seeks to provide ideas, strategies, and analyses of politics, culture, intellectual life, social movements, and social theory both in the U.S. and globally, as well as to unveil the dynamics of classism, racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and "othering" in all its dimensions.

The Tikkun Institute invites academics, writers, artists, musicians, and political and religious leaders to become Tikkun Fellows. You can do this anywhere in the U.S., though we invite you to spend a year with us in Berkeley and to participate in online discussions, shape conferences, and create teach-ins or other public events aimed at refreshing public discourse, and move away from the servitude to the dominant ideologies generated in service of the competitive marketplace consciousness that buttresses a class dominated society with huge disparities of wealth, income, and recognition.

Fellows are invited to a monthly conference call at which we will discuss a Tikkun-related theme. It is our intention to find funding for these positions, but at the moment, Fellows are volunteers. To apply to be a Fellow, send an email to RabbiLerner.tikkun@gmail.com telling us about your background, intellectual interests, and what you imagine you could do to help develop the ideas, financing, grantwriting, social media presence, or public visibility of the Tikkun Institute, and why you should be considered for the position of Tikkun Editorial Fellow. **More info at www.tikkun.org/tikkunInstitute/fellow**

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The King Midas Monoculture

Why We Need Other Kinds of Money

EDGAR S. CAHN

We have a fixation on money. Now we call it by a fancy word: financialization. But the problem that fiscal fixation creates was captured centuries ago in an ancient myth, the myth of King Midas. As the story goes, Midas wanted gold—lots and lots of gold. He never had enough, and wanted everything he touched to turn to gold. And he got his wish—only to find out that the touch came with its own curse, its own pathology. First it made all his food inedible metal, and then it turned his daughter into a lifeless statue.

Like Midas, we are driven and controlled by the need for money. In this money-centered world, dialogues with government and foundation officials, with investors, businesses, and nonprofits, with communities and families are relentlessly framed in monetary terms: cost-benefit, return on investment, risk assessment, deficit reduction, opportunity costs, and gross domestic product. Our world is a world of numbers defined by the flow of money. Value is defined by price; present value is derived by discounting the future, and future value is projected from our assumptions about interest rates. We translate the value of things and people into the language of costs, price, and economic exchange. And we are monolingual—we only speak money.

To understand why and how a fixation on money foreseeably produces unwanted outcomes, we can look to lessons the Irish learned from farming just one crop—potatoes—centuries ago. Potatoes were what everyone ate. They became the crop on which the Irish farming economy depended. One particular type of potato, the Irish lumper, became the sole subsistence food for one third of the country. The potato had three times the caloric value of grain, was cheap and easy to grow and slow to spoil. In addition, potatoes also provided the food for livestock, Ireland's primary export to Britain. It was easy to overlook one flaw in that seamless cycle. There was a certain fungus, *Phytophthora infestans,* to which that specific type of potato was distinctively vulnerable. It came to be known as the "potato blight."

In 1845, between one third and half of Ireland's potato crop was destroyed by this fungus. It is estimated that on the eve of the famine, 30% of Irish people were largely or wholly dependent on potatoes for their food. By 1846, the entire crop had been wiped out. A recurrence in 1848 and 1849 wiped out subsequent crops. By 1851, 1 million Irish—nearly one-eighth of the population—were dead from starvation, cholera, and nutrition-related disease. By 1855, 2 million people had fled to Canada, the United States, Australia, and elsewhere.

The story of the Irish potato famine may not be exactly parallel to the tale of King Midas, but Midas presumably would have starved to death just as surely as the impoverished Irish. His obsession with a narrow form of wealth dehumanized everything and everyone around him. He could only see their value using one narrow yardstick.

When the great economist John Maynard Keynes accused human societies of being capable of shutting down the sun and the stars "because they pay no dividends," he was speaking at least in the tradition of an enlightened Midas. But the potato famine suggests a secondary implication for the ancient story—that if transforming everything into precious metal paradoxically impoverishes, so does the kind of monoculture that emerges as a result of this kind of myopia. Monoculture, because of its reliance on a faulty and narrow fixation on desired outcome, is what this article is about.

Our learning from what dependence on potatoes meant can be summed up in general principles that characterize the risks associated with any monoculture. Plant just one crop, and three consequences follow: (1) The entire economy

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depends on that crop. (2) The soil on which that crop relies is depleted so that future plantings require purchases of fertilizer and pesticide. (3) That crop becomes vulnerable to viruses and pests that adapt to extracting nutrients from that crop.

Reliance on one crop. We can analogize Ireland's exclusive reliance on potatoes for food and cattle feed to our peculiar and growing reliance on the finance industry. In 2008, the finance industry underwent a failure analogous to the Irish Potato famine. The crisis took the form of a liquidity crisis triggered by the bursting of the U.S. housing bubble, which caused the values of securities tied to real estate pricing to plummet. One third of the value of the world's companies was wiped out by this crisis. Bank failures, fiscal crises, budget deficits, and a deep recession have all provided a continuing reminder of the fragility of our underlying financial system. That's what happens when a monocrop fails.

When a monocrop goes down, the poor and most vulnerable are hit hardest. That happened in Ireland. Likewise, in the USA, the greatest impact of the 2008 recession was felt by minorities. Various studies report that between 2005 and 2009, Hispanic households lost 66% of their wealth and Black households lost 53%; white households lost only 16%. By 2010, when the overall unemployment rate was approximately 10%, it was 16% for blacks and 13% for Latinos. In the richest nation in the world, 45% of African American children, 39% of Hispanic children, and 51% of the children in public schools lived in poverty.

Extraction of moral nutrients from the soil of community. Monocrops do not grow naturally, so in order for them to flourish we have to make changes to the entire ecosystem. In the same way a monocrop extracts critical nutrients from the soil, a fixation on the pursuit of money drains personal relationships, depletes informal support systems, commercializes professional callings, and contaminates democratic processes. Just as a monocrop requires us to buy fertilizer and pesticides produced by others, so too in the civic domain the loss of organic support systems and the erosion of social networks escalates dependence on paid professional services provided by the nonprofit industrial complex.

We have witnessed this parallel depletion of trust, community engagement, social networks, and associations in the civic domain. Putnam sounded the alarm in *Bowling Alone*, noting that attendance at a public meeting on town or school affairs was down 35%; service as an officer of a club or organization down 42%; service on a committee for a local organization, down 39%; membership of parent-teacher associations, down 61%; average membership rate for 32 national chapter-based associations, down almost 10%; and membership rates for men's bowling leagues, down 73% (Ferguson, *Great Degeneration* 117).

The civic sphere has its equivalent to the fertilizer and pesticides that agribusiness relies on to compensate for monoculture cultivation and extraction. For our civic version of pesticides for infestations, we rely on prisons, police sweeps, juvenile penitentiaries (a.k.a. training schools), suspensions from school, and aggressive prosecutions of female-headed households for neglect and abuse. For civic fertilizer imported to compensate for the depletion of organic social capital and functional communities, we resort to nursing homes, foster care, obligatory community service to receive subsistence income (TANF), enrollment in the military, and special education programs (IEP) to supply the equivalent of enhanced social interaction associated with middle-class families. For those coming out of institutionalized settings, we have reentry programs of dubious effectiveness. These institutions are all built in order to support the monocrop, either directly or by managing the unnatural consequences in the changed environment.

A monocrop is particularly vulnerable to viruses and pests which siphon off nutrients from that crop. Financialization empowers crony capitalism, augmenting the political power of the wealthy. Not too long ago, Occupy Wall Street brought to national consciousness the extent to which the finance industry has extracted the abundance generated by our economy and channeled it to the wealthy. The stock market has more than doubled in value since the recession. Since the richest 5% own about 80% of all non-pension stocks, guess who got it? Disparity widens the further one goes up in the income distribution. The top 1% of income-earners went from receiving roughly 10% of all pretax income from 1950 to 1980 to receiving approximately 20% of all pre-tax income. And fully half of that gain (10%) went to the very top .01%. That one-hundredth of a percent went from receiving 3–4% of all pretax income to receiving 10% of all pretax income. The richest 5% of households gained at least $1.6 million in new wealth. If the U.S. had the same income distribution it had in 1979, each family in the bottom 80% of the income distribution would have $11,000 more per year in income on average, or $916 per month. Yet, half of the U.S. population lives in poverty or is low-income, according to U.S. Census data.

The financialization of our economy relegates citizens in a democracy to two functions: being a consumer and getting money to be a consumer. How much we are valued as consumers was made apparent by George W. Bush's exhortation to the nation to "go shopping" as the way to affirm our country's core values and resilience after the 9/11 terrorist attack. As workers earning money in order to consume, we are simply a cost factor that must be reduced by automation or by outsourcing to developing nations that can provide a less expensive workforce. When financialization takes hold, the promise of monetized systems to supply all fails more and more of us. As workers earning wages are squeezed, they rely more and more heavily on debt, which feeds the financialization bug—and owners of capital gain more and more power

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and wealth.

The result is the depletion of our shared sense of purpose and well-being. System after system—public education, child welfare, juvenile justice, family support, neighborhood development, elder care—exhibit various stages of dysfunction and malfunction. Financialization overwhelms and subsumes remedy via the political process. Corporations are persons with First Amendment rights according to Supreme Court decisions. Laws imposing limitations on corporate expenditures in politics to promote corporate interests have been struck down as interfering with their exercise of the rights of association and speech protected by the First Amendment.

Government becomes the scapegoat, and we increasingly lack trust in our own collective capacity to do anything. Ultimately, we lose faith in our ability to take effective, collective action. We learn how to distrust each other—unless it comes with the dollar's imprimatur: In God We Trust.

What to Do

In agriculture, we have developed ways to deal with the consequences of a monocrop: (1) planting different types of crops, (2) diversification that restores the nutrients that the monoculture has extracted, (3) letting the land lie fallow, and (4) crop rotation. All of these create a polyculture that offsets the damage done by monoculture without eliminating the original monoculture crop. In different ways, they substitute a long-term return that promotes sustainability for the short-term profit generated by monocrop farming.

Given the dominance and power of the Midas monoculture, what can be done to mitigate its controlling and deadening impact? What if we approach social problems as by-products of our reliance on a monetary monocrop? What would polyculture look like? How do we create an ecologically healthy economy? How do we bring life forces back into neighborhoods and into community? How do we restore the quest for justice to economics?

What might be the civic equivalent of diversification, crop rotation, letting the land go fallow, and organic farming?

In agriculture, polyculture offsets the three negative consequences of monoculture by:

- Providing resilience that mitigates the disaster that would otherwise cascade from the failure of the monocrop
- Restoring nutrients to the soil that the monocrop has depleted
- Warding off the fungi, pests and rodents that have adapted to extract sustenance from the monocrop

The challenge is to set an analogous process in motion to advance the emergence of a civic polyculture that can cumulatively mitigate or prevent the externalities generated by the Midas monoculture.

The quest is urgent: Our present crony capitalism will continue to drive growing disparity exponentially. Structural racism remains pervasive and feeds despair; millions of children go hungry for lack of food; despair finds expression in withdrawal and in violence; political polarization is on the rise, reflecting a deeper public rift on the role of government and the terms of mutual interdependence; democracy has been radically undermined by super PACs; politicians reward the rich with new tax cuts, funded by increasing the deficit and cutting desperately needed basic healthcare. Meanwhile, the profit-driven extraction of natural resources puts in jeopardy the planet's capacity to sustain life.

So then, how do we create the civic equivalent of polyculture? What does that mean? How do we initiate it? How do we enable it to go to scale? This article submits that getting to a healthy civic polyculture involves a three-step process: reframe, diversify, renew.

Reframe: Economics needs to acknowledge the centrality of the Core Economy

Creating a healthy civic polyculture involves reframing our understanding of economic growth and prosperity. That reframing starts with understanding that home, family, kinfolk, neighbors, community, and civil society constitute a special economic sphere where exchanges of value happen all the time—but those exchanges are driven by values other than market price.

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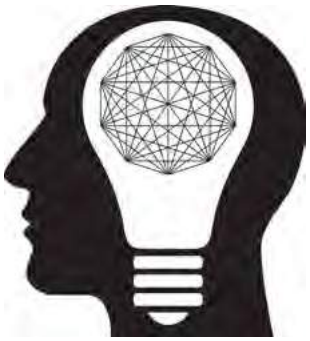
To be sure, economists have long acknowledged the existence of an economic sphere outside of markets. Designated the "nonmarket" economy, it includes illegal transactions, drug dealing, and money laundering. Those activities, while not formally included in the gross domestic product, are driven by money and are not our concern.

Our interest is in the economic sphere of the household and community, which provides the basic ecosystem for our species. In the 1970s, Hazel Henderson dubbed it the "love economy." Neva Goodwin, an ecological economist, has designated that subsystem the core sphere of the economy. Regarded as separate, the core economy generates a volume of activity estimated to equal at least as much as 40% of the GDP. A partial catalog of the core economy's productivity would include rearing children, preserving functioning families, creating safe and vibrant neighborhoods, caring for the frail and vulnerable, standing up for what's right, taking a stand to oppose what seems wrong or unfair, producing a workforce (including corporate CEOs) that doesn't steal, holding officials accountable, and incubating civic movements that mobilize to create change and advance social justice.

In designating that nonmarket sphere of life as an economy, we return to the Greek root word, *Oeconomica* — management of the household—from which the term "economics" originated. The core economy has always played a critical role in addressing basic needs. It is the economy that needs revitalization and growth. It took decades for environmental economists to get us to appreciate how natural ecosystems provide critical life-support services that even a multimillion-dollar biosphere was unable to duplicate. It wasn't until 1985 that scientists realized the significance of what their instruments had been telling them since 1976: that there was major thinning of the ozone layer in the stratosphere.

In much the same way that we ignored the ozone layer, we have ignored, overlooked, and undervalued the Core Economy as if we could always count on family, neighborhood, community, and civil society to be infinitely resilient, capable of absorbing all manner of toxicity and yet retaining adequate residual capacity for self-renewal.

Moving from the Midas monoculture to a polyculture begins with a recognition of and concern for the entire ecosystem that supports life—for our species and for other species. Home, neighborhood, and community are the ecological niche of our species. Efforts to create a civic polyculture represent an environmental preservation effort for that ecosystem.



An ecosystem perspective provides the starting point from which to protect and restore the fragile human biosphere that requires trust and decency, that nurtures healthy neighborhoods, nurtures children, cares for the elderly, preserves basic human rights, and sustains democratic governance. The survival of our species depends upon the restoration of our habitat. We need to restore the core economy to health and vitality. But what does that entail? How do we do it? How might we get there?

We begin with this reframing that incorporates the core economy as central to economics. We proceed then to ask how best to diversify in order to advance a civic polyculture that values types of activity that the market does not value. That will require reliance on mediums of exchange other than money. We need to elevate their role.

Diversify: Breaking money's de facto monopoly as definer of value

The government creates our money supply primarily by authorizing banks to make loans on which they charge interest. Our regular money supply need not be the only game in town: on that front, banks are not the only entities that can create money or other mediums of exchange. Bitcoin has provided a kind of global wake-up call. But a fundamental distinction needs to be made between ***alternative*** currencies and ***complementary*** currencies.

Bitcoin is an alternative currency. Alternative currencies seek to be a substitute for money. Pricing in alternative currencies tends to mirror market pricing in government-issued money.

Complementary currencies, such as learning credits and time credits, are different. They are complementary because they define value differently from monetary price. Thus, learning credits measure the acquisition of knowledge or the development of some functional competence. Earning them takes inputs of varying amounts of labor. The competence or expertise they confirm may vary in market value. A degree in philosophy may vary in market value from a degree in engineering, but an earned credit (reflected in a transcript or certificate or degree) reflects a level of mastery recognized by others.

Learning Credits

The ability to transmit learning gained across generations should rank high on a scale of Darwinian assets. In the 13th century, a system of degrees (bachelor, master, and doctorate)

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came into existence, and degree-granting authority empowered universities. In the 1900s, the Carnegie Unit and the student hour were adopted for measuring educational attainment.

Learning credits conferred by decrees, certificates, academic credits, and licenses constitute a medium of exchange that defines and confers value in distinctive ways. Examples include: service learning, practicums, internships, community service requirements, residencies, and clinical education.

Historically, learning, whether formally recognized or not, had both intrinsic and extrinsic value. As human beings and as citizens, we explore and we learn to act more wisely, to appreciate ideas and culture, and to deepen our connections with our past and with others. While learning has an instrumental value as a pathway to employment, the sense of meaning, purpose, growth, and personal fulfillment gained from learning transcends market value.

Sources of credentialing can vary. Professional associations and licensing authorities can establish levels of expertise and specialization. The recent decision by the Boy Scouts to extend Eagle Scout status to females demonstrates how organizations can expand access to measures of value, stemming from membership linked to learning and performance.

As a medium of exchange, learning credits produce labor and services that would not be available otherwise. They also define a culture, a legacy, a sense of identity, and a community of shared values that is unique.

Time Credits

Originally called service credits, time credits are an indirect product of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. The legislation implementing that effort required "maximum feasible participation of the poor" as a core element of antipoverty programs. Compliance with that requirement generated extraordinary results. The following programs started systematically enlisting clients as essential partners and coworkers: Head Start, the Job Corps, Foster Grandparents, Manpower Development Programs, and Community Action Programs. Those programs surfaced a vast, untapped store of human capacity in the most disadvantaged communities. Discretionary grants generated legions of nonprofits with leadership honed during the 1960s and 1970s. All of this was paid for by money—but that was before profit making became our national fixation and financialization became ever more dominant.

When funding cutbacks ensued in the 1980s, TimeBanking emerged as a new complementary currency to address critical needs and to harness the vast capacity that the Civil Rights Movement and the War on Poverty had made visible. The first time credit programs were funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as an initiative to provide support to enable frail, elderly persons to remain in the community. It

did not take long for creative thinkers to apply TimeBanking to multiple social problems.

Every TimeBank follows a few basic rules: all hours are equal in value, regardless of whether a member provides a highly skilled professional service or simply drives another member to a doctor's appointment. Members earn time credits by helping other members or by engaging in some joint initiative that addresses a specific problem, generates mutual support or builds a sense of community. Walking a dog, holding a neighborhood potluck, writing a report for an organization, and organizing home visits for persons discharged by a hospital all earn time credits. The sponsoring organization determines which activities it wants to promote that will advance its mission.

Time credits are not for sale and cannot be converted into money. Members can spend time credits only on labor that builds community resources, furthers a charitable purpose, provides personal support, or remedies a social problem. When a member receives an hour of service, there may be a moral or social obligation to pay it back, but there is no legally enforceable obligation to do so. (The U.S. Internal Revenue Service has ruled that because TimeBanks are not commercial barter organizations, time credits do not count as taxable income.)

TimeBanking provides a vehicle to link the monetary and core economies. That currency enables all persons to utilize their time to define and validate their status as a contributor and a social asset. In varied programs using TimeBanking, persons classified as unemployed or unemployable—arrested teenagers, disabled and elderly persons, undocumented immigrants, home-comers returning from prisons—have each been enlisted into the workforce in programs having a transformative impact on previously intractable social problems.

New possibilities emerge when complementary currencies function as mediums of exchange that document value that is needed and recognized by others. Thanks to technology, the potential of such mediums of exchange to generate and reward labor is just now beginning to be more widely appreciated. As experiential learning gains acceptance,

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service credits and learning credits can complement each other, overlap, or merge. Both break the de facto monopoly of money as the definer of value. Both can be of critical importance in restoring the core economy and birthing both a monetary and a civic polyculture.

One example: Every student at the University of the District of Columbia School of Law takes a required course, Law and Justice, in which students must earn 40 time credits logged in the law school's own TimeBank. Once they have fulfilled that requirement, they remain members of the TimeBank, available to help each other or to develop student-generated initiatives.

That TimeBank at the law school was established to build community, reduce cutthroat competition, and generate diversity in first-year study groups. Many students earn those 40 hours helping seniors learn about benefits to which they are entitled, which triggers a kind of generalized reciprocity. To secure these services from the law students, the seniors enroll in a community TimeBank to pay it forward by helping others in their senior complex and by spreading the word both about the law school's services and about TimeBanking.

Renew: Co-production as Incubator

We have inadvertently created a society where, all too often, the only way the most disadvantaged and disenfranchised residents can get official attention and services is by having a need, problem, or disadvantage that triggers intervention. Historically, the development of entitlements represented a major advance over discretionary charity for society's unfortunates. But apart from conferring a benefit-based on specified need or past service, entitlements are not designed to identify or enlist the present strengths and capacities of the recipient. Yet, eligibility for a benefit does not preclude having untapped capacity that may be invaluable to rebuilding the core economy. Co-production is about activating that capacity in one previously defined only as a recipient.

Our abilities to listen to each other, to care for each other, to comfort each other, to come to each other's rescue, to recognize and oppose what is unfair, and to come together in small groups to make things happen are universals; they define us as human beings. They are not scarce—so they may have little or no market value. But those residual capacities are what animate the world of peer support, of extended families, of elders helping elders, of youth groups, of neighbors helping neighbors, of seniors sitting on front stoops, of affinity groups and networks that come together. It galvanizes the collective efficacy that makes neighborhoods safe. It is the ground source of movements for social justice. And it is the world of place, the social world that sets unspoken, internalized norms that shape behavior. That is the world that can birth polyculture.

Both learning credits and time credits require an institutional or organizational base to issue them and to direct their use to address unmet needs. Currently, those institutions—nonprofits, schools, government offices—are funded by rendering services. Their income depends on the services that staff provide.

But what if nonprofits also could be funded for the services that they enlist their clients and their communities to render? Community-based, faith-based, civic, and educational organizations could provide the infrastructure needed to mobilize the community and recognize contribution. Their clientele, their membership, their enrollees then become co-creators and co-producers of the efforts that contribute to greater community well-being. Faith-based organizations and healthcare organizations could function as catalysts by hosting TimeBanks for their clientele.

For example, currently, the Archdiocese of New York operates New York City's largest nondenominational TimeBank. Over 1,300 members have exchanged almost 40,000 hours of service since 2014. Members earn credits by shopping for groceries, providing escorts to appointments, fixing home appliances, placing friendly phone calls or prayer calls, knitting blankets, making wheelchair carrying bags, and more. The credits earned can be spent for classes in calligraphy, English, Spanish, and cooking and for trips to the museum. The bank creates a community where members make new friends and share home-cooked food at monthly potluck dinners, and teams pitch in when anyone comes home from the hospital and needs a support system. Surveys of those both giving and receiving the services show improvements in self-reported physical and mental health and reductions in social isolation.

Co-production is the name that TimeBanks USA has given to that partnering process. The intentional initiation and nurturing of co-production is needed, now more than ever, to rebuild community, to remedy intractable disparities, to advance social justice, and to enable nonprofit organizations and institutions to realize their mission.

Reviving, renewing, or restoring the core economy in order to offset the externalities generated by the Midas monoculture needs a process. Initiating that process takes change: *change* in the ways that human service organizations, institutions, and professionals function; *change* in the ways that recipients can be enlisted to "pay it forward"; and *change* in what funders support, reward, and even require.

Educational, faith-based, and community-based institutions can transform the King Midas monoculture by initiating or forming partnerships to launch and administer co-production initiatives. Faith-based institutions can literally give new currency to spiritual values. Nonprofits can redefine what *nonprofit* means by utilizing time credits and learning credits that transcend bottom-line bookkeeping. Each institution of higher learning could realize its own mission more fully by asking how it might enlist those whom it serves as co-producers. By combining three currencies—

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learning credits, time credits, and tuition credits—educational institutions can enlist and enroll entire communities to embark on a learning journey to address critical problems. They could grant associate faculty status to local architects of system change who pioneer service-learning projects. Their students would experience learning as an opportunity to expand the range of possibility in projects that address critical social problems by enlisting those whom they help as partners.

Educational institutions are at the frontier, wrestling with the question: what is the future of work in a world of robots and artificial intelligence? Co-production initiatives and utilizing complementary currencies will generate new answers. In partnership with faith-based institutions and non-profits, we can choose collectively to embark on a new phase of evolution—social, intellectual, and ethical evolution for our species.

Conclusion

In a world preoccupied by an unbridled quest for money and power, we are living with the political, economic, social, and environmental equivalent of Midas's preoccupation. Midas saw the error in his preoccupation with gold as the exclusive measure of value—but it took the loss of his daughter to appreciate the necessity for radical change. Social justice, the daughter of democracy, is at similar risk. An exclusive fixation on money won't enable us to nurture the values, generate the effort, or enlist the people that money does not value. Standing alone, money and market will not generate or sustain the effort needed to preserve the resilient sustainable ecosystem our species needs to survive.

We cannot allow money in its current form to continue to dominate how we measure value. We cannot exclude types of work that reknit community and advance social justice simply because the market does not reward it and contributors are not regarded as participants in the labor market. Central to this ecosystem is the world of work described by Marilyn Waring in her trailblazing book, *If Women Counted*. But counting is only the first step.

To make this transformation, we need mediums of exchange that recognize all forms of contribution. We can develop credentials earned by engagement that advances civic polyculture. Web-based information technology now enables us to document and validate contribution and efforts not valued by the market economy. It is time to undertake a conscious, collective effort to break out of the Midas monoculture.

We have what we need—if we use what we have. ■

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Creating New Economies Through the Urban Commons

JAY CUMBERLAND

Our economy has left deep scars in cities. As globalization has advanced, cities have become sites of acute oppression. The global free market has made soul-searing, society-rending levels of inequality, racism, pollution, and social isolation the daily lived experience of billions of city dwellers. Governments often exacerbate this oppression by seeking out global investors who, like parasites, extract resources from cities without giving anything in return. Both the free market and the state are failing city residents.

This weighty oppression in cities has led many residents to seek community by emphasizing differences. As German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas theorized, systems of advanced capitalism tear apart social relations. People respond to these systems by forming groups based upon differences, rather than commonalities with others. They marginally differentiate themselves based on gender, age, skin color, neighborhood, or religious affiliation. This form of community building expresses a longing for solidarity while precluding the possibility of broad-based solidarity.

These conditions now extend to the majority of the world's population. For the first time in world history, the majority of people live in cities. In 1950, only 30% of the world population lived in cities. That number has steadily and rapidly risen across the last half decade. Today, more than 50% of people live in cities.

As populations migrate to cities, cities become more oppressive, and responses to oppression tend to preclude solidarity. However, it is heartening to find people in cities across the world also building a new economy based on sharing. This is a personal solution based on collective power. It counters an old impersonal economy that individualizes social relations and alienates people. *Sharing Cities: Activating the Urban Commons*, a new book by a nonprofit called Shareable, brings to light efforts by groups in cities across the world to instantiate this new economy. This article is largely an adaptation of *Sharing Cities*. It argues that it is imperative for resilient new city economies to be based upon a political economy distinct from that of capitalism and neoliberalism. This is a commons-based political economy, where the commons is a way communities work together to manage and obtain resources as opposed to receiving resources via the free market or from the state. The commons is a viable post-capitalist way forward.

Envisioning a New Economy and Grounding that Vision

The visions of new city economies based on sharing that have grown from the arid terrain in cities are visions based upon the expansiveness of love, not the shrinking of difference and hate. They extend solidarity beyond identity groups. Where some mainstream narratives portray technology as the hero that will save cities, these visions put residents first. They foresee residents taking care of each other, their city, and their partner cities too. They focus on residents working together for the common good—the foundational skill that makes all other things possible in society—instead of for the

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profit margins of investors, who are often not residents. They put at the forefront a multitude of loving, human-scale communities managed by capable residents.

New sharing economies in cities could generate enormous change for the better. Such economies would not evenly distribute benefits across the globe, since urban areas are largely concentrated in developed countries. Still, cities are places where change is possible and can yield large benefits. In an age of ideological and gridlocked national politics, cities are places where change through pragmatic, solution-oriented leadership is possible. Since cities are more energy efficient per capita than non-urban areas, mass adoption of collaborative energy production and consumption models could dramatically improve efficiency. City residents live close together and have opportunities to help one another on a daily basis. If managed correctly through economies based on sharing, cities could become great places to live for everyone while addressing challenges like climate change, wealth inequality, and social division. They could help sustain life on earth using means that are just and liberating.

Implementing sharing economies in cities could, alternatively, yield disastrous results. Even the best-laid plans for sharing in cities can crumple under the weight of advanced capitalism and emerge as ruthlessly capitalist. Familiar examples like Uber, Airbnb, and Taskrabbit began as communitarian-minded startups based on sharing. However, once venture capital flowed into them, they became aggressive capitalistic enterprises using "sharing" as moral cover to shield them from the criticism that they consolidated wealth and undermined labor protections.

While new visions of utopian sharing cities can go wrong, they can be guided toward success. The key is to envision *real* utopias which, as American sociologist Olin Wright defines them, differ from more naive utopian visions in that they not only embody people's deepest aspirations for the world but also take unintended consequences and self-destructive dynamics into account. And as failed sharing utopias like Uber and Airbnb show us, the pervasiveness of capitalism presents dynamics that it is best not to ignore.

Sharing Cities is a guide for avoiding unintended consequences and self-destructive dynamics when creating sharing economies in cities. It presents 69 time-tested case studies and 68 time-tested model policies that implement sharing solutions in 11 functional areas of city economies. The successful enterprises and policies presented in *Sharing Cities* have taken unintended consequences and self-destructive dynamics into account. If they had not, they would have become corrupted by the background dynamics of capitalism and yielded negative results.

Articulating a Commons-Based Political Economy

The successful case studies and policies in *Sharing Cities* draw upon a commons-based political economy, which is crucial to their success. Without a transformative grounding vision like a commons-based political economy, it is easy to fall back into the destructive dynamics of capitalism. Capitalism prescribes a particular political economy, meaning a particular way of understanding the relationship between individuals and society, and between markets and the state. Visions of sharing economies depend upon and create different understandings. Those understandings are best articulated through a commons-based political economy.

"The commons" refers to shared resources that are co-governed by users according to user-established rules of governance. Commons-based resource management ("the commons") is distinct from private (free market) and public (state) management and distribution of resources. The distinguishing factor is user-managed governance. Through user-managed governance based on user-created norms, the commons gives communities the collective capacity to actively participate in decisions that affect them. This is acutely different from state resource management in a representational democracy. In both state and commons-based resource management, decisions are purportedly made in the interest of represented parties. However, where state priorities change from election to election in response to various power dynamics, the priorities in a commons remain the users' priorities.

The commons often proves more efficient and long-lasting than either state or market approaches. This was the conclusion of Elinor Ostrom's research on the commons, for which she won the Nobel Prize. In one instance, Ostrom focused on commons-based approaches to distributing water through irrigation systems. One farmer's overuse of water negatively impacts other farmers' water supply. "Traditional" wisdom says centralized state control is needed to keep farmers from acting in their self-interest and overusing water. However, Ostrom showed that overuse problems are best overcome by cooperation among farmers facilitated by systems and norms they built themselves. When states imposed solutions from

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above, the irrigation systems inevitably deteriorated. The benefits of the commons extend beyond irrigation systems to resources like housing, food, education, transportation, and many others.

The viability of the commons may come as a surprise to those familiar with the commons mainly through the famous tragedy of the commons, but in fact its viability stems from a different definition of the commons. In Garrett Hardin's tragedy of the commons, numerous individuals use an unenclosed resource. They are assumed to act in their self-interest, and this inevitably leads to conflict and overuse of the resource. The rational self-interest assumed in the tragedy of the commons fits well in a capitalist political economy. However, in a commons-based political economy, individuals act together for the common good. Moreover, the commons is not simply a shared resource subject to rivalry, as in the tragedy of the commons. It is a shared resource *and* user-managed governance of that resource according to user-created rules. The user-managed governance is exactly what Ostrom's research showed to be a viable way to manage shared resources. Part of stepping into this new vision will require us to break free from the self-understanding and ideas about "rational behavior" that capitalism imposes. Both real-life commons practice and user-managed governance can help us avoid that way of thinking and acting.

Cities are full of open resources in which many people have a stake, and they are places ripe for commons-based solutions. Land, the building block of cities, began as an open-access resource. In most cities, it has since been enclosed through a two-tiered system of private ownership and state zoning regulations. Spaces like parks, squares, plazas, and street corners remain open resources that people can access at will. However, they often fall into disrepair because of under management. Many other resources, like housing, water, food, and energy are under private or state ownership. All of these resources could be brought into the commons.

Understanding the principles that guide governance of the urban commons can help people create real utopias in cities. The urban commons puts people first as the central actors in the drama of the city. It focuses on pragmatic, community-based solutions to common needs rather than rigid, imported ideologies. It puts transformation before transaction, meaning it prioritizes solutions that meet needs while building residents' collaborative capacities over purely transactional solutions. It values experimentation, learning, and iteration by the community over application of static, "one-size-fits-all" solutions. It values heterodoxy and diversity because the urban commons needs many types of people, processes, and spheres of value creation to seize opportunities and meet challenges.

Cities full of urban commons will consist of groups of various sizes stewarding all sorts of resources, as opposed to the current model where city resources largely fall under control of states, municipalities, and profit-making corporations. In these cities, park facilities will reflect the needs of the people who use them, not the priorities (or lack thereof) of cities; transportation sharing will enable residents to get around as cheaply and efficiently as possible, rather than generating for companies; food production will exist to put food on tables, not to bring goods to market; work will empower individuals to exercise control over their financial condition and not to be controlled for the financial improvement of owners. People will participate in all sorts of interlocking commons solutions that will create what Habermas called "lifeworlds." These are spaces where broad-based solidarity can grow, spaces where people can learn languages distinct from the dominant languages of capitalism and bureaucracy. These languages of solidarity and love are necessary preconditions for the strategic political fight for the commons that will eventually be necessary.

Case Studies and Policies on Commons-Based Initiatives in Cities

What follows is a sample of the time-tested case studies and model policies from four of the eleven functional areas in *Sharing Cities*. These four areas are housing, food, work, and energy. Individuals and families spend more on the everyday resources of housing and food than on any other resources. Energy warms and lights houses, helps grow food, and powers transportation that facilitates access to resources. Work takes up the majority of people's days and determines how much capital people have to access other resources. These everyday categories, if reoriented toward commons-based provisioning, could empower individuals to join together, exercise what Christian Iaione calls civic imagination, and change their cities and daily lives for the better.

Housing

Quality affordable housing helps create cohesive, stable societies. Yet in many of the world's cities, affordable housing has slipped out of even the average citizen's reach. Without access to housing, people are set adrift and society suffers. Neighborhoods ravaged by evictions and move-outs begin to lack cohesion, making communities into mere groupings of individuals. New efforts aim to reverse these bleak trends.

CASE STUDY: CoAbode—Matching Compatible Single Mothers for Co-Housing (United States)

Many single mothers experience high rates of poverty while working tirelessly to provide their families with good housing. Markets offer them soaring housing costs. States offer lengthy wait lists for subsidized housing. CoAbode, a commons-based housing solution, believes that sharing the financial and practical responsibilities of housing can make single mothers' lives easier. It is an online platform that

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matches compatible single mothers for shared housing, services, and support. While the platform itself is not managed by users, and while users still choose from state-subsidized housing or housing on the free market, users are enabled to share housing and other resources and are encouraged to communicate very deliberately with their housemate to make the relationship work. Co-housing families reduce their financial costs by sharing food and childcare, gain more free time, and benefit from mutually supportive relationships as opposed to interfacing solely with a bureaucracy. Membership is free, and there are 120,000 members registered in U.S. cities like Brooklyn, San Diego, and Washington, DC.

POLICY: I Love My Neighborhood ("Quiero mi Barrio") Community Renewal Program (Chile)

To counteract long-lasting housing deficits, the Chilean Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning subsidized construction of 2 million houses between 1990 and 2005. In doing so, it provided no opportunity for residents to co-create their neighborhoods. This resulted in social segregation and stigmatization. To address these challenges, the federal government initiated a national program called "Quiero mi Barrio" (I Love My Neighborhood). It enables residents in 200 municipalities (3% of the Chilean population) to collaborate with the state in city development. Its goals include: strengthening the social fabric, emphasizing the collectivity of neighborhood life, and improving neighborhoods' physical condition. To achieve these goals, Neighborhood Development Councils (NDC), consisting of social organizations and elected local residents, were established to provide a place for debate about community priorities. Public commitments were made to carry out agreed upon projects, with NDCs ensuring projects were completed. While implemented by the state, Quiero mi Barrio's utilization of NDCs tended toward the commons by attempting to incorporate users in decisionmaking. This tendency was aspirational, since only a few elected community members were able to participate on each NDC and influence community urban development. The transition to the commons will be marked by many small steps like this.

Food

Cities become more equitable when they provide all residents with fresh, local, and healthy food. Citizens and cities can work together to make this happen, and they are accomplishing this by creating new models of food production, acquisition, and consumption led by citizens through bottom-up innovations and top-down sustainable engagements.

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CASE STUDY: League of Urban Canners—Stewarding Urban Orchards (Boston, MA)

Planting an urban fruit tree is an intergenerational civic responsibility. Each summer in Boston, large amounts of fruit fall to the ground and rot. Enclosed on private property, these trees cannot get their fruits to the public. Property owners and municipalities are pressured to remove the trees that produce these "nuisances." At the same time, many urban residents struggle to access local food sources. The League of Urban Canners developed a network of individuals to cooperatively map, harvest, preserve, and share these fruits from the urban commons. It makes agreements with property owners to share the work of fruit harvesting and preserving. Preserved fruits are shared between property owners (10%), preservers (70%), and harvesters (20%). Each season the volunteer-run enterprise harvests and preserves 5,000 pounds of fruit from a database of more than 300 trees and arbors. By bringing fruit trees out of private property enclosure, making them an open resource, and harvesting and distributing fruit according to mutually agreed upon norms, the League of Urban Canners makes urban fruit trees into a commons. The fruits of their labor are distributed back to users, never touching the market or state. This is a small opening in the emergence of a fundamentally different economy that will grow as the project expands and is reproduced in other communities.

POLICY: Urban Family Gardens—Growing Local Food Security (Medellín, Colombia)

The "Huertas Familiares para Autoconsumo" (Urban Family Gardens for Home Consumption) initiative helps vulnerable families access the training and land necessary to grow their own healthy, fresh, and nutritious food. The program values peer-learning and takes advantage of the knowledge and expertise of participating families to provide the training the group requires. Where training is lacking, a local government-appointed panel that includes an agronomist, social worker, and nutritionist is available for further support. The program has been implemented in 13 of Medellín's 16 "comunas" (neighborhoods). In 2013, it reached 150 vegetable gardens. By 2014, it had expanded over threefold to 435 urban family gardens. Food production in this program is not commons-based, since families mostly produce food for themselves on their own land. However, the program's pedagogical approach approximates a knowledge commons, where formerly rural families work together to manage their shared knowledge of food production rather than simply learning knowledge from state actors.

Work

Cities strive to attract and grow jobs. Many follow the mainstream economic theory that low wages and tax breaks for corporations best attract investment and drive job growth. However, entrepreneurs, communities, and cities are developing alternative, innovative solutions to generate local economic development and sustainable job creation through worker-owned cooperatives and responsible, sharing-based organizations. These collaborative ventures increase prosperity, address inequality, and accelerate opportunities for value creation.

CASE STUDY: Evergreen—Co-op Ownership to Build Community Wealth (Cleveland, OH)

Most job-training programs help workers get jobs, through which they get wages. An alternative approach in Cleveland, Ohio suggests more is possible. Evergreen is a network of worker co-ops held by a nonprofit. It gives workers from historically marginalized communities pathways to good jobs and an ownership stake in a democratized local economy. Its worker co-ops include a green industrial laundromat, a solar installation and energy-efficiency retrofitting company, and a large-scale commercial greenhouse. The linked-cooperative structure has enabled the creation of a home-buying program that has helped many Evergreen worker-owners become homeowners. Currently, Evergreen has over 100 worker-owners and an annual revenue of over $6 million. It demonstrates that inclusive and cooperative-driven economic development is a viable and scalable approach to fighting inequality. Moreover, it demonstrates that the commons can occupy even the most time-intensive portion of people's lives—work. Wages and money generally are open resources intensely fought over. Evergreen's worker-owners get money neither from state generosity nor from a boss who could fire them at any time, but rather through a business they govern based on agreed upon rules.

POLICY: Procomuns—City Policies for the Commons Economy (Barcelona, Spain)

Barcelona city government believes that the commons-oriented collaborative economy is better for city residents than the commercial-oriented collaborative economy. Moreover, the city council believes collaborative economy policies should be produced collaboratively. That is why it created BarCola, a working group between Barcelona City Council and 20 Barcelona sharing-economy enterprises. It also created Procomuns, a forum for policy cocreation. Procomuns has developed and proposed over 120 policy recommendations for Barcelona, including specific measures related to work. These policy recommendations strive to promote fair, respectful, and nonexploitative working conditions, particularly in collaborative-economy projects. Through these projects, the state creates more space for commons-based enterprises to thrive. It also begins to recognize that decisions about civic life can be handled by commons-based assemblies.

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Energy

Currently, fossil fuels are drilled in few locations, distributed and refined by few corporations, and used by companies with monopolies or oligopolies to generate electricity. This scarcity- and centralization-dependent model allows for vast profits and leads to widespread environmental devastation. As an alternative, people are turning to locally-based renewable energy generation. This reduces monopoly control of energy production, spreads profits, and could drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Local production alone does not ensure equitable distribution of benefits and therefore active community support. However, shared, local energy infrastructure—where people own and operate energy generation facilities and the means by which energy is distributed—does create community support.

CASE STUDY: Middelgrunden Wind Co-op—Shared Energy Creation (Copenhagen, Denmark)

The Middelgrunden Wind Turbine Cooperative, formed in 1997, allows multiple households to pool their money together to build costly wind turbines. As co-owners, they make investment decisions and negotiate the terms with operators of larger electric networks. It has partnered with the Copenhagen municipal utility to build 20 wind turbines of 2 MW capacity each. The co-op owns the turbines, and over 8,500 people from in or around Copenhagen own the 40,500 shares of the co-op. Each co-op member has one vote regardless of their shares. One wind turbine is even a "children's wind turbine." Shareholders' children vote on their behalf. They learn how to organize a sustainable future by participating in a commons-based decision-making process regarding shared energy resources.

POLICY: Community Solar Gardens (State of Minnesota, U.S.)

Many people want to use renewable energy yet cannot because they rent property or do not own buildings where a solar array can effectively generate energy. In 2013, Minnesota developed a "community solar gardens" program that allows utility customers to purchase shares of local solar photovoltaic energy facilities built by private companies, municipalities, and electric co-ops. They can then obtain energy from these community solar gardens. The state made the process as simple and transparent as possible. As a result, many solar cooperatives have been formed and applications have been filed for 214 project sites since 2013. This includes 85 projects being designed and 33 projects in the construction phase. This program largely provides energy through a combination of state and free-market provision. However, it begins to allow renewable-energy creation to take place on a scale small enough that commons-based management becomes possible.

Conclusion

These case studies and policies witness a global urban commons movement which has at its heart, people working together, not the market. This urban commons movement represents a normative claim that cities should be run by ordinary people. It is a claim being made by city residents around the world who desire a new economy.

The case studies and policies in *Sharing Cities* demonstrate not only a claim that cities should be run based on the commons, but also the fact that it is possible to run much of a city on a commons basis. Each case study represents real effort by real people in real places. These people are making decisions about what affects their civic lives; they are not copying and pasting imported models into their cities. Each case study shows, in one way or another, that a city can, in nearly every way, be of, by, and for the people. They show that visions of cities full of urban commons are visions of real utopias.

The urban commons is a process that is constantly shaped by engaged city residents. This demand for constant engagement is a difficult one. It is even more difficult because a capitalist and neoliberal political economy has made residents unlearn modes of cooperation required in the commons. To exist under the weight of existing capitalistic architecture, the urban commons requires citizens to exercise intellect to understand and to enact the transformative grounding vision of the commons. It requires the sustained energy of dreamers who imagine a new future for cities based on abundance, celebration, and broad love. This real utopia requires work, but it is worth the effort.

A free and complete PDF version of *Sharing Cities: Activating the Urban Commons* can be found at https://www.shareable.net/sharing-cities. ■

JAY CUMBERLAND is a law student at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law. He is focused on researching and lawyering for the cooperative and commons movements, with a specific focus on the urban commons.

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Feeding Children, Communities, and Souls

A Tradition-based Alternative to Agribusiness in New Mexico

PAMELA HAINES

Eight-year-old Stefano Castro, born in Mexico, was eager to tell his mother about his recent farm trip:

> First I saw Fidel and his friends dancing to bless the land. To start the dance, they blew into a shell and made a fire in a bowl. The dancers have a lot of things to put on, like white robes with sashes. . . . I have seen clothes like that in Mexico. Next I helped plant some seeds. It's a lot of work.
>
> At the greenhouse, my friend Andrew showed me how to harvest the lettuce. I helped by picking a lot of leaves. There were about 800 million plants in there. It was the most fun thing I ever did.
>
> The next day I helped him load the salad on a truck so he can drive it to the school. It was heavy and cold. Now when I eat salad at school I remember all the people and the work that goes into making it, and it tasted really good too.

How did a handful of Quakers' concern about militarism grow into this program that now provides fresh organic produce to more than half of New Mexico's school children? Through the story run strands of deep listening, respect for native spirituality, and a vision of an economy and a land that nurtures the community's well-being.

It started in the early 1970s, when Quakers from New Mexico approached the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) headquarters in Philadelphia to explore the possibility of developing a program in northern New Mexico. A leading concern was militarization and the military economy connected to Air Force bases and weapons laboratories, including Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories, where the atomic bomb was designed and manufactured. New Mexico had been annexed to the United States following the war with Mexico less than a century before the Second World War, and Friends (AFSC members) were seeking a means by which to counter a social order based on organized violence.

Following its normal practice, the AFSC sent out a small team to consult widely with Friends and members of local communities in the northern Rio Grande region of the state. Over and over again, they heard concern from the community, not about militarism but about land and water rights. The result of these listening sessions was a decision to set up a program in support of traditional communities, whose titles to land, water, and common natural resources had been expropriated by the federal government and unscrupulous private interests. The people of these communities, largely Hispanic and Native, had lost access to the resource base that had enabled them to preserve their culture and lifeways; many had been reduced to finding occupations in the armed forces, representing the political authority that had taken their land.

The AFSC recognized that, while there were other organizations resisting militarism in the area, the more pressing need to which they could respond was for economic alternatives to military employment, and that success in this area required a greater capacity to regain lost land and water rights.

The pueblos of this area have a water system that dates back to before the Spanish arrived in 1540, built around communally managed irrigation ditches called acequias. The Spanish settlers brought additional irrigation technology developed in North Africa with them to New Mexico, and the two approaches combined to form the regional systems that have provided water to agricultural communities for the last 400 years. Both Pueblo communities and Spanish colonial settlements had access to land and natural resources

Kelly Schaeffer

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confirmed by the Spanish Crown and the Republic of Mexico, an arrangement that was challenged by the United States' annexation of northern New Mexico following the defeat of Mexico in 1848. With water becoming an ever more valuable and contested resource, defending this traditionally shared system was pivotal in protecting traditional water rights.

The AFSC heard the underlying spiritual principle, that the water belongs to the earth and the earth belongs to God, and they followed the community's lead. In 2002, after working for 25 years to protect land-grant communities and empower regional acequia associations to advocate for historic water rights, the AFSC program in New Mexico turned its attention toward the land. How might traditional land-use systems and values best be supported in the 21st century?

AFSC began supporting sustainable agriculture practices, already so deeply embedded in the culture, by training new farmers and developing cooperative marketing systems. They piloted a farmer-to-farmer training program in Albuquerque and incubated a now flourishing farmer co-operative, the Agri-Cultura Network. ACN began selling produce to the Albuquerque public schools and soon spun off as an independent co-op.

In 2012, this farmer-to-farmer training program expanded into northern and southern New Mexico, resulting in scores of new farmers, technical support for over a hundred small farms, and two more farmer cooperatives. Several critical needs are being addressed in this process. Many older people in some of these communities are no longer able to work the land. If it's not in use for three years, however, they lose the water rights. At the other end of the age spectrum are young people who need work in this region of high unemployment.

To secure land and water rights and ongoing employment requires stable markets for farm produce. So the project advocated for the state to fund public schools to purchase from local farmers. This resulted in school districts receiving thousands of dollars to pay for school lunch ingredients from local farms—which predominantly benefit low-income children like Stefano on the free or reduced school lunch program.

The goal is a self-sustaining system, which involves developing not only farming skills but also skills in running cooperatives and marketing. While AFSC staff provides training for running a farmers' cooperative, early in the program, the practice of setting aside a small percentage of profits to be plowed back into the cooperative to cover costs is introduced, so that within three years the co-op can be self-sustaining.

It's a classic win-win situation. With contracts with the two largest school districts in the state (Albuquerque and Las Cruces), as well as some smaller ones, the program now serves more than 30,000 children. Some farms are serving schools less than a mile from where the food is grown. At the same time, small family farmers have a strong and stable market for their produce, and they are able to both secure a livelihood and protect their traditional land and water rights. As Don Bustos, former director of the AFSC project, says, "We see this as a real positive way to keep our water intact, keep our land in healthy use, feed our kids in the same way, and put enough money in our pockets to pay the bills."

Don Bustos explains that the cooperative model helps small farmers build their economic power without getting caught in the traps of competitive capitalism. "We teach people how to grow food in a way that's all replicable. So the same people that are growing the lettuce greens here in Las Cruces, the people that are working in Albuquerque are growing the same salad greens, using the same methods, same harvesting techniques as in Española and other areas, so that they can aggregate their product together to meet the large demand of an institutional buyer. We're trying to say, 'Let's work together to create the market and the market needs to fit our demands. So instead of Yvonne trying to undercut Manny selling her lettuce, let's work together, let's plant the same things; here's what it costs to make a living, here's what you need to pay us.' So it's changing that paradigm of market strategy in capitalism: 'Let's work together as a unit, as a community, and let's get what we need to make a living for ourselves.'"

This work is starting to change the economic landscape of the area, as it shifts the locus of food production away from agribusiness and toward local communities, and moves distribution and marketing infrastructures away from corporate models and toward cooperative control, while leveraging public funds to help create markets for local produce in a way that meets pressing human needs. Thus, a network of cooperative enterprises, founded on community empowerment and individual transformation, is building up the soil from which a completely reimagined economy can grow. These fundamental

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Kelly Schaeffer

shifts in economic dynamics, already transformative on a small scale, contain the seeds of a very different world.

This story, however, is not just about economics and cannot be fully explained or understood without attention to the spiritual foundation. The values run much deeper than a belief in organic farming or cooperative enterprise. Stefano caught a glimpse of this in the traditional prayers and dances that came before the planting.

In much of New Mexico, agriculture is culture, and culture is rooted in spiritual practice. The program is based in this reality, but it can be hard to talk about. Many religious traditions around farming are intentionally unrecorded, since putting a sacred act into written words risks taking the spirit out of the practice. Sayrah Namaste, current program director, speaks with feeling of this truth, saying there's no way to capture in words what some of the prayers, or the spirit that accompanies them, feel like. These are things that are sacred.

A practice she does feel comfortable talking about, one that has stayed with the people of New Mexico for 400 years, is the celebration of San Ysidro, the patron saint of farmers. The legend of San Ysidro has been told for centuries throughout Spanish-speaking countries. Ysidro and his wife, Maria de la Cabeza, were poor farm laborers to a wealthy landowner in Spain around the year 1100. Humble and devout, they went to Mass every morning before work. Yet despite the lost hours of labor, their fields were as well cared for as those of other laborers. This created envy among the others, who complained to the wealthy landowner that Ysidro and Maria spent too much time praying. The landowner checked on them, and found that while Ysidro and Maria were praying at Mass, an angel was plowing their fields for them.

Many miracles are associated with Ysidro and Maria, especially miracles associated with water, since water is so important in this dry land. Every May 15th, the feast day of San Ysidro and Santa Maria de la Cabeza is celebrated. Though it comes from Spain, it has been adapted by indigenous people. Every village honors it, everybody comes out, and the AFSC project has been active in support of the tradition.

Each feast day a farming family is given a statue of San Ysidro to take care of for the year. They decorate it with flowers, keep it on their farm, then pass it on with a basket of fruit and flowers the next year to a new family that has been selected by the community. Farmers come together in a procession along the acequias. They throw in flower petals so that the petals float along with the walkers. The walking is their prayer as the community blesses the fields and the water.

There's an order to who walks—Catholic deacons, laypeople, nuns, indigenous folks. Azteca dancers in full regalia lead the procession and pray with their dance. There are Catholic songs, indigenous songs, prayers in people's native languages that were never written down, all about blessings and respect for water. Eight years ago, Sayrah remembers, they realized that there was only one person in the clan who knew one of the prayers by heart. They had to call this woman so they could learn it and keep the tradition alive. At the end, there is a traditional home-made feast, and everybody sits and eats together. Then the Azteca dancers close with a dance to the four directions.

Sayrah emphasizes how this is not just a Catholic tradition. Although indigenous groups were forced by conquistadores to take on the Catholic religion, over time they incorporated many of the forms into their spirituality. Catholics will dip a

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branch from a juniper or piñon tree in the water of the acequia and bless the people with it. Indigenous people say the water is blessing us. This public blend of indigenous and Catholic traditions on San Ysidro Day is unusual, and it is lovely to witness the mutual respect for each other's religious beliefs.

Sayrah goes on to recite the very simple prayer that most New Mexicans, regardless of where they are from, say before they plant. Taking four seeds, they say in Spanish:
"This seed is for myself and my family, this seed is for my neighbor, this seed is for the animals, this seed is for the thief." They recognize that wildlife has rights, and that there will always be people who will take your food without asking. Rather than claiming ownership, they recognize that they are planting for everyone, and that if someone is stealing food, they must really need it.

She recalls a time when the AFSC program was housed in the basement of the Quaker meetinghouse in Albuquerque. It was 2008 and times were hard. In exchange for having the rent waived, they planted a garden. One day, they went out in the garden and found a man with a bag picking vegetables. He panicked on being caught, but they said he could take what he needed. That was what it was for. Even the sign said, "This is a Friends garden." He came back the next year and said he had been unemployed, and that the garden had fed him. You plant for the thief. It's a spirituality not of individualism, but of community.

Being respectful of spiritual and cultural traditions means that starting in a new community can be a slow process. "We have spent a year getting to know the people at the Jemez Pueblo, listening, learning about the relationships, getting a fuller understanding of the cultural values and traditions at their Pueblo," recounts Sayrah.

This attention to culture and spirituality resonates with project participants. A young woman from the AFSC training farm in southern New Mexico reflects on the impact of visiting her father's family in Mexico: "I always had the dream of coming back home and having my own piece of land like I saw in the pueblitos, growing your own food, sustaining yourself and your family." After three years on the AFSC training site, she thinks of all the things she's learned and the people she's met, "other farmers from across the world who are doing exactly what I'm doing, trying to create an alternative to the industrial food system, and trying to feel the connection with those people."

Another farmer trainee comments, "To be honest, in my mind, I don't see it as training. I see it as my work. I consider myself already a farmer even though I just barely began, but I'm so invested into it I feel like I'm a big part of the farm. When I barely began, I was super tired when I got back home, but now I feel more energized. After I just rest for a little bit after work, I feel as if I can just go and go and go."

Don Bustos, whose family has farmed the same land for 400 years, markets more than 72 varieties of crops, including berries, tomatoes, squash, peppers, and greens year-round. "We wanted the ability to retain our land for future generations and not have to develop it into houses," he said. "We wanted to stay close to what we've done. Preserving our land ties into the spirituality of how we grew up."

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Over the years, the project has developed the capacity and flexibility to help meet the land and food needs of different communities in a variety of ways. In some communities, the farmers are already masters in traditional farming. They know all about the three sisters, where the maiz stalks provide a structure for the frijoles plants to climb up, the frijoles provide nitrogen to the soil for the maiz and calabaza to use, and the calabaza leaves provide shade, which discourages weeds and helps retain moisture in the soil. Instead, they are interested in learning about the potential of passive solar cold frames and hoop houses to extend their growing season, and about high-value market crops like greens, berries and asparagus that can be grown along with their traditional crops.

One native tribe requested AFSC's assistance but did not want to be involved with the market economy at all. They have a large community of elders for whom they wanted to provide fresh, healthy vegetables, and a community of youth who are learning to farm. They asked AFSC to help them obtain a large passive solar hoop house that would permit year-round food production. AFSC found a donor to purchase the materials and then trained a group of youth from the tribe to construct it. The beds were raised high enough that the older people could have access to them. Thus, the youth gained construction and farming skills and elders got good, nutritious food without any money changing hands.

A project partnership in the border region of Anthony gives incarcerated youth a second chance. The Mexican women in the southern border region of Chaparral knew how to farm but needed access to land and the skills to develop a cooperative structure to better market their produce. At another community near the border, after an initial period of training, the clear need that emerged was for cold storage so their harvest could stay fresh till it got to market.

The AFSC has helped to knit these projects together and provide the infrastructure to make them sustainable. Staff have helped the farm cooperatives negotiate initial contracts with the school districts and worked to create a network of cooperatives across New Mexico. With very different growing seasons in the north, center, and south of the state, by working together the co-ops can complement each other's efforts and provide a broader range of foods throughout the year. As the co-op members learn these aspects of the business, the AFSC is steadily working itself out of a job.

The questions around which they based their programs are simple, and can be asked anywhere. How are the folks who are closest to the land doing, and what do they need? What are the good, healthy ingredients in a local place (culture, water, soil, farming traditions, community connections) and how can they be built on? Where do people's skills, experience and longing for a life of meaning meet their community's need?

Though they are simple, taking these questions seriously can have far-reaching implications. Centering our activities around them requires big shifts in power, strategic priorities, accountability, and guiding values systems. Stefano talks about helping to plant seeds. He is excited to simply grow lettuce. But the seeds of something much bigger have been planted here.

What might they grow into? We don't yet know in full. But as we claim the necessity of connection to land and place, as we call on the wisdom that underlies and transcends different religious traditions, as we build an economy that centers around community well-being, as we relocate power from outside systems and institutions to the living relationships in our midst, both with each other and with the earth, we are planting the seeds of change, seeds of transformation of the whole economy. ■

PAMELA HAINES, a longtime resident of Philadelphia, is active in peace, justice, and environmental work among Quakers. She has written a Pendle Hill pamphlet, *Waging Peace: Discipline and Practice*, led a variety of workshops on faith and economics, and spoken on the topics of climate, justice, and racism. Her paid work includes capacity building among childcare workers, teaching peer counseling, and leading family play groups. She is on the board of the Mill Creek Urban Farm in West Philadelphia, is active in her community garden, and enjoys deep personal connections in Poland and Uganda. She is passionate about quilting and repair of all kinds and blogs at www.pamelalivinginthisworld .blogspot.com.

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Organizations that Embrace Interdependence

JENNIFER RAU AND JERRY KOCH-GONZALEZ

Every individual has needs. Beyond the traditional conception of survival needs (water, food, etc.), we need connection. We are social beings, interdependent not only for water and food but also for intimacy, play, creativity, meaning, and purpose.

We come together in groups to increase our effectiveness in meeting our needs. And those groups—couples, families, tribes, nations, small businesses, and global organizations—differ in their level of connection and in their levels of complexity.

Formal groups (organizations) have an energizing, unifying purpose or aim, such as producing a product or providing a service. The aim is the organization's unique invitation to belong. Organizations shift the "I" to the "we." We individuals gather together to act as one organism.

To act collectively toward a shared aim, we answer some questions, implicitly or explicitly. Who does what? Who decides what? Who decides who decides what? What happens if something we do does not work for everyone? How do we know if what we are doing is effective? A group of people working together for a shared aim needs a governance framework: an organizational structure, a way to make decisions, and a way to learn and adapt. This article weaves together governance, the promise of a new economy, and the concept of oneness in our interdependent relationships.

Frames of Governance

We often resort to tools and frames of reference around governance that we are familiar with. Families, for-profits, nonprofits, religious organizations—we rarely question their governance methods. While "governance" seems like an abstract concept, it affects us directly. How is a family structured? Is it a couple, a single parent with children, or an extended family? How are decisions made about what to eat, where to live, or what movie to see? By mutual agreement? Autocratically (father/mother knows best)? By majority rule? Are the voices of some not included? Governance is everywhere, wherever people organize themselves and make decisions together.

There are two primary frames of governance: domination and partnership (Riane Eisler). Or, as Charles Eisenstein has named it: the story of separation and the story of reunion-the relationship with "it" versus the relationship with "thou," in Martin Buber's thinking. These frames identify two different ways of relating to each other:

- *Domination* governance is inherently binary: those who are in power and those who are not. Out of scarcity fear, decisions are made to benefit some and cost to others and future generations.

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- *Partnership* governance seeks to most effectively meet everyone's needs. Partnership governance recognizes the essential both-and oneness of the individual, the group, the world. Everyone's needs matter, everyone's voice matters.

Majority rule sits in between—having neither the authoritarian clarity of "because I say so" nor the clear assumption that everyone's needs matter. Majority rule becomes a game of winning and losing: whose needs will get met at the cost of which other group. It is easy to think that our primary purpose is to act in the interests of "people like us"—our subset of humanity with whom we have connection. Oneness does not seem possible—we win, or they win.

We are used to justifying power and oppression by telling ourselves that there is no alternative. We accept the common myth that one can *either* be inclusive *or* be efficient but not both.

There is an alternative. An approach to governance that includes both effectiveness and inclusiveness is possible and available. That approach requires letting go of the stories of scarcity and separation. What we need is a governance system that starts—*and stays!*—with oneness as a design principle. We need a governance system that counters the current dominant cultural imprinting and supports us in balancing our competitive and our cooperative selves to everyone's greater good.

What can partnership governance look like? How can we hold the principle that everyone's needs matter while still carrying the traces of the trauma of lifetimes, generations, and generations of generations that have endured sexism, racism, classism, and more? We are deeply entrenched in inequality and in the story that some people's needs matter more than others. We are so separated from each other that we do not recognize our oneness. This affects everyone: it takes one to compete and all to cooperate. How do we run human organizations that embody the conviction that everyone's needs matter and that also are effective in getting those needs met? If the "new economy" is to be one where everyone's needs matter, this is an essential question that needs answers, not only on a theoretical level but also in the concrete doing, in our everyday interactions in our new economy organizations.

Jennifer Rau

There are many ways to live within an organization, and some are more effective than others in achieving the goal of staying connected and holding everyone's needs as precious. A governance system that would offer a real and viable alternative will have to embody the principle that we are all one, while valuing and celebrating differences in our perspectives, experiences, and strategies to meet our needs. A governance system that balances out individual, group, and society and allows for all to be interdependent.

We will describe here one such possible method of governance: sociocracy (pronounced like *sociology*). Sociocracy means governance by the socios—those who associate together.

Sociocracy begins with the belief that everyone's voice matters. Its roots are in a Quaker school and an engineering business in the Netherlands. The Quakers believe that there is "that of God" in everyone. From engineering comes the cybernetic focus on feedback loops to test how systems work. These roots are reflected in sociocracy: (a) that we are all one while we might still have different experiences in the moment, and (b) that including input from the environment is key to adaptation and transformation. As different as those roots seem, they support each other: only if we hear much about and from each other will we be able to recognize our interdependence.

How it can be Done

Organizations are about doing things together, so let us go to specific examples of how sociocracy embodies interdependence. We focus on three practices common in sociocracy.

Rounds: Speaking one by one—everybody listens

Starting on the micro level, we need a way of organizing who speaks when. "Free flow" conversations often turn into debates where those who are used to being in power dominate the conversation. To counterbalance this, sociocracy uses *rounds* to organize talking turns. A round is simple: everyone gets to speak, one by one, comparable to passing a talking stick in the Way of Council. We talk in rounds to ask questions and to explore together the topic at hand. We do consent rounds to make decisions. The practice of rounds is a way to be intentional about who speaks when—an example of the principle that everyone's voice matters. One by one, each individual offers their perspective and their piece of the truth to the group.

Rounds may be simple, but they are not necessarily easy. Rounds require discipline and imply a culture change: those who have not been speaking up are asked to claim their voice,

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their mattering. Those who are used to speaking at will are asked to share the space more equitably and may resist their loss of privilege. Listening to everyone takes time, but in the end, rounds save time because rounds reduce repetitive debate, ego-driven speech, and hurt feelings. If a group is large, breaking the group into small groups creates the possibility for everyone to be able to speak and to listen within the time frame of a meeting.

When we experience being heard, we relax and become more willing to take in other people's perspective. Humans change and grow through relationships, and rounds are a way to facilitate this shift. The process becomes more spacious and more open to creative ideas. The energy changes from talking *against* each other to sharing our unique perspective as an offering to the group. Rounds take us beyond right and wrong, and they support an inner orientation toward results that are cocreative rather than ego-driven. It also means relief: we do not have to solve all problems by ourselves. We do not have to know. We can settle into a place of wondering, of exploring together. We have time and inner space to witness each other as whole human beings and to become curious about the most compassionate question: "I wonder what is it like to be you" (Charles Eisenstein).

When we witness a whole and unique human being we also witness universality. "You and I are as much continuous with the physical universe as a wave is continuous with the ocean" (Alan Watts). Other beings are "all you, only you can only experience it one at a time. Everybody is I, you all know you're you. . . . It doesn't make any difference. You are all of them" (Alan Watts). As we let go of our ego and surrender, fully relating to each other's experience, a universe opens up. Rounds slow down the process so we can witness everyone's oneness at a human pace.

Decision-making

When it is time to converge into making a decision, sociocracy uses consent as a decision-making method. In consensus, people typically ask if everyone agrees. In consent decision making, we ask if anyone objects. No objection can be ignored. We distinguish between objections and personal preferences that do not rise to the level of objections. With consent as the decision-making method, personal preferences can be voiced and heard, but do not keep a decision from being made.

If someone objects to a proposal, it is because the proposal might keep us from doing our work effectively. *"I object"* means "*with this policy in place, I cannot do my work as well.*" A simple example: a member might propose a membership fee in order to better fund the organization's projects. A possible objection might be that this may exclude current members who are not be able to afford the fee. Nonviolent Communication (NVC) teaches that anyone saying *no* to a request is saying *yes* to a need of their own. In our example, *both* proposer and objector are saying *yes* to doing good work with the organization's members. One is saying *yes* to productivity (through better funding), and one is saying *yes* to member inclusion. Any objection is saying *yes* to wanting to do good work.

An objection is welcome information, not a roadblock. An objection is an invitation for policy improvement. Willingness to experiment helps a group shift from endless discussions toward action. Beyond the pragmatic underpinning of experiments for sheer productivity, there is another mental shift. A decision does not have to be perfect anymore. We can make decisions that are *good enough for now*. We can ease into a certain humbleness—an acceptance that we cannot predict the future. Instead, we make a good guess and try out what happens. Experiments generate information to be used in the next round of decision-making. We operate from *not knowing* and guessing, not from a fixed mind and righteousness.

We incorporate objections into solutions that everyone can move forward with. In this way, consent is a mechanism that filters different opinions and enables the group to focus on people's needs, without getting lost among different viewpoints.

Consent decision-making does not reward divisive behavior: we start out aware that we want to make decisions work for everyone, not just for the majority or those in power. The combination of rounds and consent decision-making helps us

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focus on the content and reasoning being shared rather than on lobbying to win a majority vote, or on speaking loudly and frequently in order to get our way in consensus.

Sociocracy also uses consent for elections. Only those who no one objects to can get into office. Therefore, people are selected for roles not by volunteering or by majority rule, but on the basis of personal knowledge about the match between qualities observed in a coworker and qualities needed to fill a particular role effectively.

Making a whole from the parts

Consent decision-making, like consensus, does not easily scale to single groups that are larger than a handful of people. Large, flat organizations where everyone has to decide about everything are not realistic. Instead, sociocracy follows the principle of subsidiarity—always distributing power to the most grassroots organizational units possible. Interdependence is maintained by the practice of double-linking nested circles. A circle is the semi-autonomous team that is responsible for carrying out a particular subset of the organization's aims. Each circle has a leader and a delegate, and these two circle members are called the "double link," because they both also serve as full members on the "parent" circle at the next, more broadly-focused level of the organization.

Consent and double-linking in combination make shared power possible throughout a complex organization. No two linked circles can overpower each other because two people will be part of the decisions in *both* circles, and neither voice can be ignored. Power is shared from both "bottom-up" and "top-down." Information flows easily and each circle is empowered to act. A human being's muscular system does not ask the respiratory system for permission to contract a muscle. Likewise, in sociocracy, each circle acts freely within the limits of its domain. The pattern of linked circles can be repeated, like a fractal all the way from the grassroots up to the boards of directors for large organizations. Imagine Indra's net, where pearls are the connectors in an indefinite web, and in each pearl we can see the reflection of the whole. Linked circles and consent decision-making encourage us to problem-solve while holding the unique individual and the entire system in our hearts and minds at the same time. If there are gaps and some group's needs are not taken care of, we will hear about it through the feedback system. There is no *other* anymore. There is just *us*.

Therefore, double-linking and consent practiced together are an embodiment of interdependence. If one of us hurts and is ignored, then the whole system will hurt. Sociocracy offers methods that ensure those voices will be heard. All in the organization are connected, like quantum entanglement. The focus on feedback brings scientific discipline to organizations that might otherwise drift in naive idealism.

Sociocratic organizations are not owned by boards or management or outside investors. Sociocratic companies can function within capitalism and can even be attractive to investors because the increased commitment of the workforce reduces the investment risk. On the other side, when workers are making consent decisions about what they do, how they do it, and even why they do it, then sociocratic companies can be excellent vehicles for the transition to the new economy because they unify investors, workers, and communities toward effectiveness in meeting everyone's needs.

Sociocracy, in a sense, is a collection of best practices supporting the effectiveness of egalitarian organizations. From its beginnings in the Netherlands, sociocracy has spread worldwide and is applied in for-profit and nonprofit companies, in independent schools and intentional communities, in permaculture associations and IT consultancies.

Egalitarian governance, like mindfulness or a spiritual life, benefits from daily practice and clean, reliable, and adaptable processes that serve as safety nets for our communication and decisions. These processes are not there to constrain us, rather, they are there to support us in being who we want to be: semi-autonomous and considerate interdependent beings.

In order to build a new economy based on the story of connection and interdependence, we need governance systems like sociocracy, systems that embrace and practice that new story on a micro and a macro level. Any conversation or organization that lets us fall into *us* vs. *them* will lead to separation, "for the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Audre Lorde). Governance tools can support organizations to contribute to meeting the world's needs and can support people to experience each other as connected, interdependent, uniquely beautiful beings. Egalitarian governance approaches like sociocracy can be foundational elements of the Gandhian constructive program for the world we know is possible. ■

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Anchoring the Heart of a Democratic Economy

J. TYSON CASEY AND CRISTINA MOON

Unabashed white supremacy, rising nationalism, and creeping fascism. Russian hacking and fake news. The manipulability of the attention economy. The threat of nuclear war.

All of these are reasons to believe that democracy is under global threat. But is it?

Yes, what we call "Big D" Democracy—i.e. the institutions of our representative democratic systems—is genuinely threatened by vote tampering, voter suppression, election rigging, propaganda, incitement, and violence. As a result, these times feel full of doubt and unease. However, this moment is also full of potential. It's ripe with lessons on how to design a true rule of the people, by the people. We have the chance, right now, to craft "small d" democracy that extends far beyond our limited institutions of representative government. We have the chance to *live* democracy—not just live *in* one.

It is precisely because of our collective anxiety that we have this opportunity. The turbulence and groundlessness we have been experiencing in 2017 and 2018 have already jolted many of us awake. Beyond mindfulness and the pursuit of inner peace is a call to spiritual warriorship that many of us are hearing. Embodying democracy is one way to respond to that call.

If you've been hearing the call as we have, you may resonate with our assertion that it's time to make the worlds we inhabit mini laboratories for democracy, consent, and equity. The communities in which we live, the groups with which we dialogue and work, our one-on-one interactions, and even the internal, somatic experience of our own bodies and inner wisdom are all fertile ground for growing a new world. The seeds we suggest planting hold the deliberate and mindful practice of lived, "small d" democracy. Through cultivating "small d" democracy, we can build the larger systems of democracy that we wish to live in. We can open up possibilities we hitherto thought were impossible, or would never have even thought of.

Below are some practices that can be used individually and in groups, and which can constitute a collective exercise of radical individual and interpersonal leadership. They are fundamental and go to the root. It is likely that they will also be uncomfortable. They will challenge you to understand democracy in a whole new way—a way that depends on you. When you're depended on, you can't shirk responsibility or fall asleep. Embodying democracy means being awake and actively engaged throughout your life, and in two critical ways.

Democracy is commonly defined as a system of governance, but it is fundamentally a way that individuals choose to share power in relationship to one another. It requires compromise when there is disagreement. To know how to arrive at agreeable compromise requires that the individuals involved practice: (1) **agency** to advocate for our own positions within a social structure or relationship and (2) **consent** as to how we will pursue shared, intended outcomes, horizons, and visions—as well as how to negotiate compromise.

Although both agency and consent are required in order to live with democratic principles, it feels like neither are fully present in our current system.* It feels risky to assert and take up this power for ourselves, even when motivated by Right Intention. So we often look to others to exercise political power. In the face of gross injustice or harm, we think, *someone* will stand up. *Someone* will come up with a solution. *Someone* will lead. That is how we fall asleep.

The practices we outline on the next page are a way to wake up. They are a way for us to lead authentically right now, rather than wait for someone else to. They are momentary practices, as lived governance of people and by people is impermanent, iterative, and requires continual tending.

Democracy today is a cynical reduction of the beautiful potential of this human existence. Tragically, that potential is our birthright, and in its reduction, we're robbed of it. Our current system cashes in on the faulty characterization of a

*In fact, our democratic system has slid toward authoritarianism and the consolidation of power since the 1970s. After decades of direct action, civil disobedience, and wins for the rights of workers, voters, property owners, marginalized communities, and the environment, U.S. society was at its flattest and most democratic. What we have seen since is growing corporatization and the consolidation of power in the hands of a relative few bodies of government, corporations, and individuals. We've seen democracy and rights rolled back, and inequity widen.

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Practice: Agreements

The workshops, courses, and trainings in which we've felt the greatest agency among all involved was when all had agreements. The agreements were alive—established at the outset and revisited routinely. They are also a vibrant way to live democratically, moment to moment, and build the muscles needed to practice democracy in other areas of our lives. We share some of our favorites below.

We want to underscore that agreements are active. They allow agency for those who choose to abide by them. They only live for as long as those involved consent to them. When relationships shift, pre-existing agreements need to be revisited. Lack of clarity around agreements will lead to conflict—and those conflicts are valuable opportunities to cultivate agency and work toward greater relational consent.

These agreement practices can be adopted by groups. Individuals can also engage in them as mindfulness practices that cultivate an interior understanding of consent and wisdom.

Practice: Take Space/Make Space

(*You may know this practice as Step Up/Step Back. Because of the ableism inherent in that naming, we now call it Take Space/Make Space.*)

Whether in formal settings like meetings or informal spaces like public transit, some of us tend to fill space while some of us make space for others. This practice, which is fundamentally about airtime and presence, is about cultivating self-awareness and trying to reverse our habits.

An easy way to start is to mentally track who speaks, and how frequently, in group discussions. Are some voices being heard a lot, while others are going unheard? Are some voices missing entirely? Perhaps some identities are dominant in a conversation.

What about your own voice? If you speak often, practice leaving space and silence so others can contribute. If you don't speak much, claim some more space for your ideas and inner wisdom.

Inviting the group to be aware of and change some of the participation dynamics can be eye-opening. Rather than call out specific individuals (who may not have consented to being called out, individual naming, or public shaming), you can ask to hear from some of the voices that haven't spoken. You can also highlight how many individuals of one identity you've heard from, and which have gone unrepresented.

If necessary, we recommend asking for permission before following up with individuals after a group discussion. Ask for their consent to discuss something they said or did—and if they say no, respect their wishes. If this feels like it privileges the consent of someone who has just disrespected another's agency, we recommend working with sensations in the body in the way we describe on the following page.

natural human existence as nasty, brutish, and short. It assumes that human beings cannot conceive of interests beyond our own individual desires, or of a time frame longer than a few years. Democratic institutions are built to protect us from ourselves. But in the process, they take the humanity out of institutions and organizations. The humanity is even leached out of our own cells—though not completely.

We see hope in the increasing amount of time spent looking to human institutions—whether it's a system of voting, governmental agencies, corporations, or nonprofit organizations—to reflect our humanity back to us. More and more of us search for ethical behavior and beyond the bottom line to demonstrate that there is humanity within corporations, which are legally considered "people" in the U.S. We have a hunger for it. But in our yearning, we are distracted from opportunities to embrace and feed the humanity within and between us. We are left wanting.

We are also left oppressed and dominated. Our current system slides toward authoritarianism and inequity because it habituates us to the perception of limited choice. It defines democratic participation as a sporadic practice exercised under strict conditions. These tightly bounded and limited opportunities to act out democracy (periodic elections, two-party systems, etc.) habituate us in a critical way to limited agency and scarcity.

This limited—or institutional—democracy buoys the interlocking systems of domination and oppression (misogyny, racism, classism, etc.) we continuously struggle against. The eventual and inevitable outcome of this habituation to limited choice and power are manyfold. Whole communities are silenced, pushed to the margins, and even erased. The range of what's possible becomes narrower and narrower as power pools. We accept a false sense of freedom when true freedom should not coincide with such robberies of personal power.

Furthermore, the wisdom within each of us that could help us transcend our individual and collective bonds has become suppressed. Our abilities to hear it in ourselves and recognize it in one another atrophy. Because of this, we prioritize expediency and efficiency over inclusion and equity. Our own opinions and needs trump those of others, and we find it challenging—if not impossible—to make decisions that ask

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Practice: Engage Your Body as An Active Agent

The nervous system is an extension of the brain that touches every part of our bodies. Below is a practice that can help you learn to treat your body as an active agent in the relationship of you. By consulting its wisdom, you can benefit from more data than what's in our brains alone and build your whole body's capacity for embodying democracy.

This is about practicing how to listen to that wisdom. If you are not familiar with somatic work, then some of this might not resonate much at first. We ask you to try it anyway. This will help cultivate connections between your mind and body, and reinforce potentially new patterns of learning. Your body will be learning even if your mind is resisting. This is a relational process.

Begin by finding a comfortable position for your whole body—one where you can remain relatively still for 15–20 minutes. Bring your awareness to your breath, breathing in slowly through your nose, if possible.

After an inhale, hold your breath for a few seconds and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Do the same, breathing into various parts of your body—your spine, shoulders, lungs, diaphragm, etc. Just spend some time moving oxygen around the body to ground your relationship.

Then, ask your body permission to consult and listen. You may also ask a directed question like "What do you need?" Listen for the response.

Bring your awareness to any and all sensations in your physical and emotional body. Ask again, "What do you need?" and listen to your body's response.

Turn your attention to sensations that are specific to a certain place within you. Ask a question like, "How can I better support you?" Listen for a response.

Write down whatever arose in this inquiry with the body, and offer gratitude for the dialogue with your body and the messages you received.

us to give up our privilege and power. We struggle to frame our decision making and build systems with the next seven generations in mind.

This is why we advocate for starting small and with radical practices in our everyday interactions and our bodies. Agency and consent are ways to expand possibilities, as well as to lengthen time by slowing down. Every moment holds the possibility for exercising individual leadership and democracy. The practice of embodying democracy is alive, dynamic, and always at the learning edge. It asks much of us, including the development of wisdom and discernment—the ability to know whether we consent and if consent has been authentically and fully given by another in increasingly nuanced and insightful ways.

Developing this discernment can take time. It requires refining our verbal communication to get the information we need through dialogue. We can add different modalities of nonverbal communication to our toolkit as well. The best agreements include not only alignment between our minds—as expressed through words—but also alignment between our bodies. Somatically, we may know that something energetic that is outside of either of us feels right. It takes time, applied effort, courage, and discipline to learn to hear that wisdom inside and around us.

We are each differently attuned to our bodies and conditioned by a society that depends on the neglect of our body wisdom. We're trained to prioritize ideas over sensations. This conditioning is very deeply rooted in our minds and our late-stage capitalist industrial/postindustrial cultures and the interlocking systems of domination that we experience on a daily basis. Neglect of our body feeds these systems of domination and oppression. Yet our bodies know so much more—they hold the wisdom of our ancestors in each cell.

Practicing agency and consent is a positive feedback loop, and individual leadership eventually becomes muscle memory.

Practice: Personalize Wisdom

As you learn to hear the wisdom of the body and the wisdom within, it's important to speak about what you've experienced in the first person. Use "I" statements that are anchored in your own experience, rather than assuming that what you perceive is unadulterated, objective truth.

For example, you can describe what it's like to tune into someone's difficult emotional experience in two ways: "As you tell that story, I can tell you're actually deeply angry inside" versus "When I heard your story, I felt a deep anger inside, maybe on your behalf".

The first projects your perception on to someone else, while the second personalizes your wisdom. Even if you are tuning into another person's experience, you're still owning your own sensations and interpretation of them. You are also offering the idea of whatever unprocessed emotional material you may be perceiving that the other person can work with in a way that embraces their own agency and consent.

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It moves from potential to something we intentionally cultivate and eventually to something we act out through habit. Hearing and discerning our inner wisdom becomes a part of us we can no longer ignore—or even imagine living without. And most importantly, when the shit hits the fan, falling to our level of practice—rather than rising to the level of our expectations—is more likely to create a positive outcome.

When we've iterated and reiterated the practice of "small d" democracy in our interactions, our communities, and our bodies, it will be ready to inform the institutions and systems we want to build. As we prioritize the breath in our bellies over the thoughts in our brains, we learn to consult far more wisdom than we knew we held—for the benefit of all, now and in the future.

The lessons of our ancestors are our genetic gift as human beings. We are survivors because we come from survivors. We can hone our abilities to remember and access our long lineages of belonging, being, acting, and surviving. Through practice, we can access the psychosomatic experience of our ancestors imprinted within our own cells.

When democracy is anchored in our hearts and in our bodies like this, it can never truly be under threat. While institutions crumble and erode from the inside, we reify, strengthen, and refine "small d" democracy in every exchange of power, every act of alignment and compromise. Where institutions are rigid, embodiment is flexible and dynamic. And the DNA of more beautiful, authentic systems in which humanity is accessed and honored is protected and made stronger in each of us. ■

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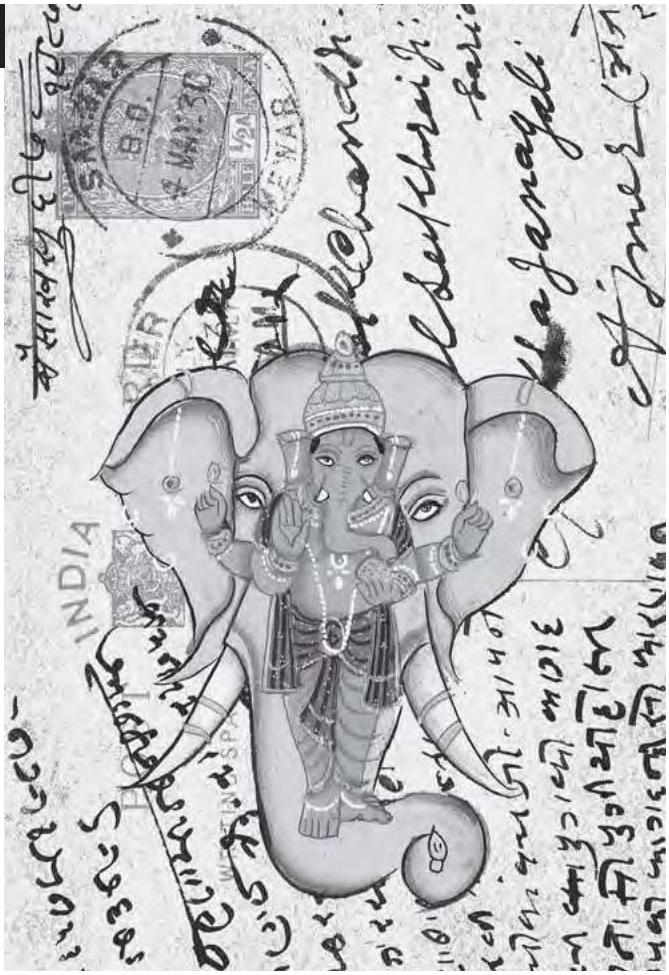
CULTURE

Letters to Lord Ganesha

BY ARIEL DORFMAN



FROM THE VERY START, Ankur had been against sending the invitation letter to Lord Ganesha, but had reluctantly agreed upon Roshni's resolute insistence. Even though he didn't want to begin their marriage with yet another argument, he couldn't help himself from scoring a point or two. "What?" he said with clenched teeth, as if he were trying to bite his tongue, but not really biting it at all, not keeping that acerbic tongue of his under control. "Do you think Ganesha is really going to show up at our wedding? Should we set the table with an extra plate in case he decides to accept our invitation? They say his elephant head has given him a prodigious appetite, ready to eat the cutlery and even the wall decorations if we don't feed him every last morsel prepared for the guests."

She did not respond to his sarcasm, merely shrugged in the direction of her mother and his mother in the next room,

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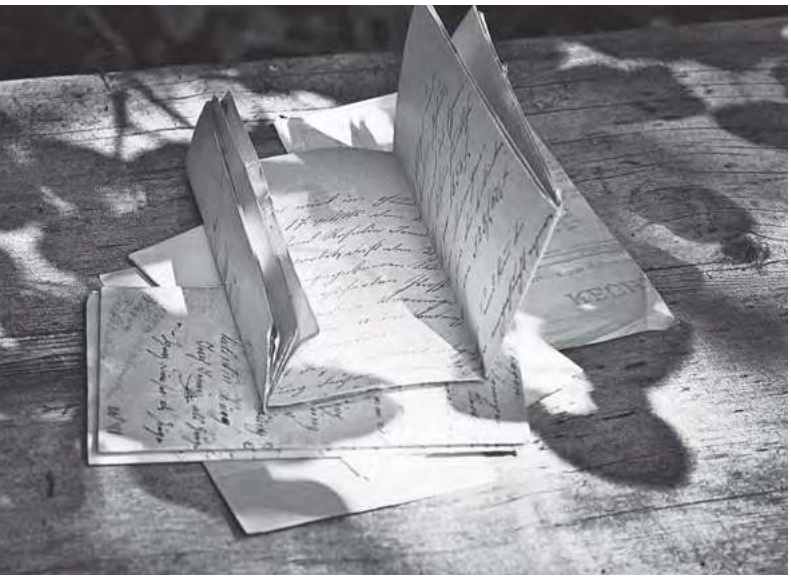
conspiring and muttering together, both of them adamant that things be done in the traditional way, that the blessings of the God with the face of an elephant be invoked as the initial step to happiness; the couple needed to invite Lord Ganesha to their banquet, no matter how much the bridegroom considered himself a thoroughly modern man, determined to sweep into the dustbin of history the excessively superstitious practices from the old India that were holding this country of ours back.

It was the replica of a dispute they had been engaged in since they had first met, when he had espoused the need for radical, immediate change, and she had retorted with "It's best not to overthrow a king unless you can guarantee that his replacement will do a better job."

A tired discussion that Ankur preferred not to revisit, not now, not with the delights and tensions of the wedding looming ahead. And besides, of all the Gods, it was Ganesha he liked most; he had always had a soft spot for elephants. *If you can't beat them, join them*: he silently mouthed the words to himself, and in order to compensate for his mordant mockery of Ganesha as the Dinner Guest Who Never Showed Up, he surprised Roshni by suggesting that rather than a form letter, the typical clichéd expressions that adorn so many marriage invitations, with cream colored paper and golden bangles flittering from the sides, he and she, Ankur and Roshni, should write something real, should ask for concrete, tangible blessings, and use the occasion to imagine their future and cement their love.

And, indeed, they enjoyed composing the letter, full of sweet words and eternal vows. In the years ahead, they would come to cherish those many hours spent side by side, the experience of writing a message with input from one and then the other, creating out of nothingness a perfect creature, as if anticipating the child they hoped to someday forge from within their bodies. Constructing their infinite tomorrows word by word by word, he so deeply communing with his wife-to-be and she with the man who was soon to share her bed and much more, that one evening he admitted to her that perhaps there was a deeper wisdom to the ceremony, that perhaps they should go and deliver their love letter and appeal for benedictions, do so in person. If Ganesha will not come to us, we should go to him.



She deflated the proposal like an old, crumpled balloon. Though pleased that he had been enlightened, at least in this matter, she reminded him of the prohibitive cost of such a journey, time consuming precisely when he was working extra hours at the office in order to help pay for the honeymoon, and besides, she said to him, as she would often do over the years as their marriage foundered, you were against writing the letter in the first place, you were so thoroughly modern, so thoroughly up to date, against everything that reeks of old India, and now, typically, you want to make amends in a jiffy, not so quick, my dear, not so easy.

And yet, back then, it had been easy. Not quick, but certainly easy. Ankur liked to recall the joy of those hours when she had suggested an adjective—*bright*—and he had countered with a similar one—*light*, like the name Roshni—and the harmony that had embraced them as they settled on dawn, which was both light and bright and sun and horizon and new beginnings—Lord Ganesha was the God of all that began anew, after all, wonderful to reincarnate their different views in one word.

It had augured well for their marriage, this temple of terms and expressions and comments that they had erected with respect, a way for each to probe the other, hold hands in the mind, and kiss and fondle and caress before their nuptials, before anything carnal could join them or come between them. Touching each other with their tongues, meeting in the in-between, the paper laid out like a white sheet, like a canopy in front of them, each syllable like a drop of gentle sweat, like hair mingling from a woman and a man in the night, like breath in his mouth from her mouth into his and into hers, him caring enough to stretch his imagination, her welcoming him and guessing his innermost secrets, and him opening the many layers and lips that had remained private for far too long.

"What went wrong?" Ankur would ask himself years later, when the nostalgia for that interlude of peace had been replaced by mutual recriminations and bitterness. "How could a love that started so auspiciously have turned into this battle for supremacy in the home?"

And Roshni had echoed the thought in her own way: she also recalled the entwining of their souls that had occurred during those hours of composition. "Maybe it was the letter itself," that was the way in which she answered from near and far, from her body so near, from his mind so far. That was the way in which she answered his unspoken apprehension, what

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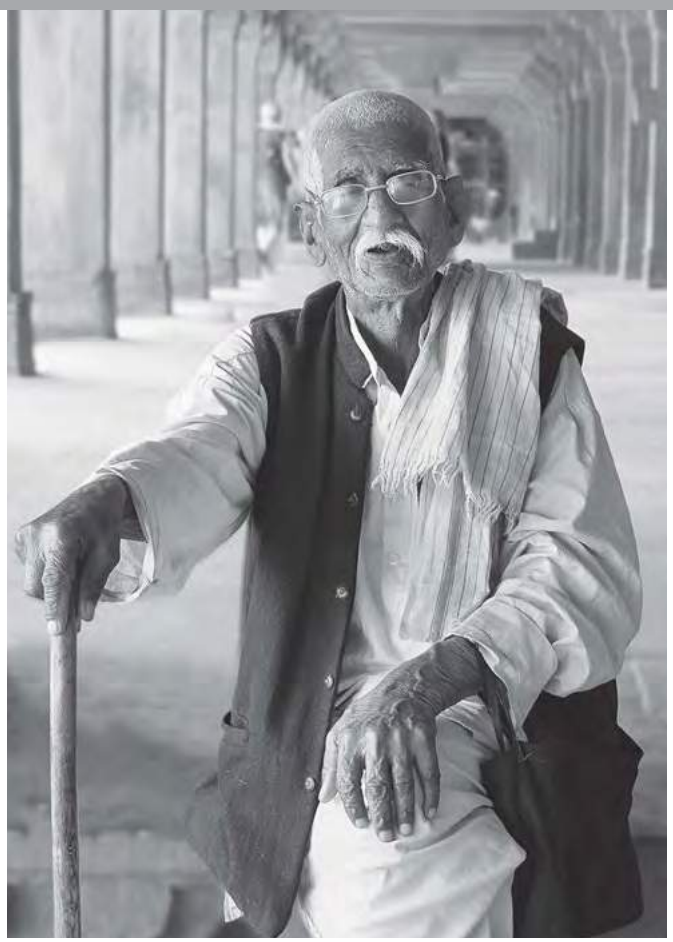
he did not dare to state out loud. Yes, she was still able to divine what he was thinking, even before he had entertained the thought itself. "Maybe we expected too much, expended so much effort and pleasure into writing the letter and did not leave enough for the hard task of everyday life and strife, maybe the letter to Lord Ganesha was too perfect, set the bar too high, created an ideal impossible to grasp, so that it was all downhill and disillusion after that." And then, when she was alone in her room, half-sobbing so he would not hear her and ask what in the hell was the matter, then, later, she would add to herself a reproach, the sort of hint she did not address to him—heaven forbid that she would accept that he was right about anything!—"Maybe it's the other way around and we did not go far enough, we did not complete the pledge and promise of the letter by delivering its contents in person to Lord Ganesha. I was the one who insisted on writing it and then pulled back when he ended up embracing the idea so enthusiastically. Maybe I should have consented to the pilgrimage to the Shi Ganesha Mandir temple at Ranthambore, not clipped Ankur's wings so swiftly and severely and caustically. Maybe if I had been less contentious or more adventurous or simply had real faith that what we were writing in unison was not mere words but a blueprint for what we needed to do, a time map to the future, maybe our marriage would have turned out differently."



If I had been different, if he had been different, if she had, if Ankur, if Roshni, if I had understood, if she had understood, if he, if she, if me, if you, if we, if we, if we.

No use crying over spilled words—a reflection they both murmured to themselves resentfully, still sharing the witticisms of the past without knowing that they did so—no use in regretting the past when the present had so much miscommunication to regret. What's done is done, the invitation was not conveyed in person to Lord Ganesha, not one of their fervent desires was conveyed directly to the Remover of Obstacles and the God of New Beginnings—and he, of course, had not deigned to knock at our door, did not sit cross-legged with his mouse at our banquet table the night we were wed.

Trying to convince themselves they'd done nothing wrong.

Like thousands of other young couples in Rajasthan and across the whole subcontinent, they had posted the letter in the most thoroughly modern fashion, pushed it into the slot with his hand and her hand united in one sublime geometric gesture, heard it plop onto other fluttering, stiff envelopes, had turned their backs on the post office without even a final goodbye to that proof of their love. They had not even kept a copy of the first document of their desire.

Though they had both somehow memorized the contents—so much copying it out, so many little corrections and amendments and ameliorations that they had somehow consigned to the inner core and sanctuary of their recollections the letter's verses and vocabulary. If anyone had asked—but no one did, no one knew, not at all, not at all—what they had revealed, what they had begged for, both she and he could have recited those longings with the precision of the astronomical instruments of Jantar Mantar, and the fragrance of the gardens of Jaipur. Indeed, it could almost be said that it was this mutual, unconscious, persistent, incessantly personal and intense daily re-creation of their common dreams, that kept them together through the decades of misadventures that followed, each of them holding on to the idea of the other when things went sour, each of them reminding himself, herself, that an unknown postman in faraway Sawai Modhopur, had received the letter and acted as their emissary, walked through the Forest of Tigers, ascended the steps strewn with jabbering monkeys and penitent pilgrims, entered the Fort and then the Temple, clinging to the message they had sent through him, the anonymous postman, to ask for blessings, Ankur and Roshni renewing their vows by imagining the journey they had not undertaken and the long ago letter that year after year kept fusing and confusing them. They had swum into each other's depths once at least and were not willing, not him, not her, to abandon the hope it contained, the glimpse of an alternate tomorrow, the promise of splendor in the leaf that has not yet completely fallen. If he could write those words for me, if she could spell out her love for me, if he could show me his true soul, if she could smile her way and words into my heart as we wrote, if we could laugh together back then, if we could iron out our disagreements as we accepted the other's suggestions and

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limitations, curtailing our doubts and conceding a point, if we tolerated discrepancies and contrasts, if we could do it once, why not again, who is to say that we will not mine the mirror of our souls again, find the lake we have lost on the road to wherever we were trudging or soaring, who is to say that we cannot regain paradise?

Keeping them together till a day would arrive, when a light, a bright, a dawn, would arise, when fate would knock at the door like a wind or the solitary tusk of an elephant, and they would be given a second chance.

* * * * *

So they were not surprised when that day did arrive, when the light and the bright and the dawn of a new beginning came, when there was a knock at the door, and the past rushed into their house, it could almost be ventured that they had, each of them, Ankur and Roshni both, been expecting that moment, been living for this moment.

They had never before seen the old man who was standing there.

And yet recognized him, somehow separately and concurrently recognizing that he had come to rescue them as in the old stories and myths, the knock had echoed in their home in the very middle of a huge row that had commenced with the slightest disagreement (whose turn was it to sort the dirty clothes?) and had escalated into rebukes and then screams and after that tears and false accusations and false defenses, and so they had hailed that interruption—anyone would have done the trick, forcing them to be outwardly courteous with the interloping stranger while inwardly seething at the all too familiar stranger standing next to them called husband, called wife, anything that would postpone one more session that invariably ended in resentment and exhaustion and, eventually, mutual silence.

Ankur ushered the old man in without asking the purpose of this unexpected visit and she hastened to put the kettle on for tea without asking whose turn it was to perform that task.

The old man—wizened and yet with sturdy legs and a strong build and a bashful, bowed forehead—sat himself down at the round table in their kitchen, as if he were very tired or perhaps mute, because he had not uttered as much as a sigh.

But when he began to speak there was no stopping him.

"You do not know me, Mr. Ankur, Mrs. Roshni, but I, alas, know you. Though I should have known you many years ago, but really only became acquainted, registered your names, read your desires, recently, much too recently.

"Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Ashlesh Singh and I inherited my profession from my father, as he did from his. We should have been actors in my family, and perhaps, despite our name that indicates warriors among my ancestors, the truth is that we are all natural performers, able to elicit laughter from the sorrowful and drag tears from the most cheerful face, always eager to tell a good tale. We were endowed with voices like honey and the stamina of elephants and an ability like birds to inhabit the words of others and bring them to life and fruition as if they were our own. It may have been that empathy—or maybe that and a combination of so much else, not to mention good luck, which landed my grandfather his job of postman for Lord Ganesha in Ranthambore, a most wondrous and responsible calling: it is my family, my father and my uncles, myself and my brothers, and now my sons as well and their children tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, we are and were and will be the men who receive all the cards and missives, the invitations and supplications, each letter addressed to the son of Shiva and Parvati, Lord of Hosts, Trinetra Ganesh Ji, worshipped in the important temple dedicated to him in the world, where the icon of the all the icons, the only one with three eyes, stands waiting benevolently, waiting for letters to arrive, waiting for the men of my family to read them to him.

"From the moment I had use of speech and thankfully before, I was told the story of Lord Ganesha and how I would come to serve him and serve those who believe in his powers. Thankfully, I say, because the first sound I ever remember hearing was not the crooning of my mother or the many tones of my father rehearsing a joke or reciting a Bhajan, but the roar of a tiger, the striped threat of lightning in my throat, gorging on me, tearing my heart out—even if we lived in Sawai Modhopur, once in a while the tigers would wander into town, would prowl the streets in search of meat, and that night, the night I recollect as my beginning because it is what I remember as the beginning, that night a tiger had found its way outside the walls of our house and inaugurated my existence with a roar. I opened my eyes that Wednesday, hoping it was a nightmare, but it wasn't. The growl reverberated again and portended my death, and it was then that I laid eyes on Lord Ganesha above my cradle—it was a picture, of course, but how is a child to know this, how is a child to distinguish a picture from reality, a story from a dream, a dream from a fact? Lord Ganesha appeared in all his chubbiness and his belly so big and his many hands and his three eyes, and the tiger suddenly grew still and slunk away into the quiet; later I was to discover that elephants were used in tiger hunts by kings, that tigers are aware in their bones that an elephant cannot be defeated, I was to tell myself that Lord Ganesha had paid me in advance for the services I would render him, he was protecting his postman and performer.

"So I was more than ready for the story of how he had been born while his father Shiva was away and that's why his mother had demanded that her boy allow no one in to see her while she was bathing. I don't know which of the many versions of the story you have been taught, but in the one recounted to me, Lord Shiva, as befits the Lord of Destruction, had come back from who knows what war and tried to enter his home and was stopped by the son he did not recognize.

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on 23 July 2018

And in wrath had killed the boy, had cut off his head with his three-pronged sword and sent the skull a million miles away, into the ether of space from whence it could not be retrieved. This story I repeated to myself as the years went by, because I was destined to serve as the bridge. On your devotion rests the happiness of so many remote couples; you will pronounce words of hope from a woman and a man about to wed, an invitation to the feast and an invitation into their lives. It was as if Lord Ganesha himself were speaking to me: I am alive only because of the love of a mother. The child was dead. What is done is done, Lord Shiva declared with finality. When life is over, the future has dried up like a river that will never again flow. But my mother would not accept this verdict, Ganesha whispered to me. Time and flesh are not irreversible. There is no river that cannot return to its source, even if each river returns in a different form. And my own mother, the mother of Ashlesh Singh, repeated the same belief to me. Say it, she whispered, and Lord Ganesha echoed her inside me, say it. It is never too late. Say it. It is never too late. And Parvati forced her husband, Lord Shiva to say it. It is never too late. If there is really love, my father the postman said, and Ganesha smiled inside me at these words, if there is really love, just a spark of it, it can never be too late, remember that.

"So Lord Shiva sent his men out looking. Find me the head of a baby, a male child that is nursing, even the hair on a head is enough. But they could not find even one that day—perhaps because the sun had hidden out of fear that a father should have cut off the head of his own child, perhaps because the stars did not want to see the world ever again if such a crime could be committed, perhaps because only the dark could illuminate the roads along which the soldiers ran, seeking and searching and burning their torches as they looked for the child—until, shattered and drained, they came upon a tiny baby elephant drinking milk from its mother, saw it was male and brought it to Shiva; this was all we could find. And though it is true it is never too late, even if this is true, time can run out for a miracle, the body of the dead son was about to decompose if it was not freshened with the blood and wisdom of another human or another animal, and Shiva made one body of two and Ganesha was born. And the one condition that Parvati demanded, if Shiva was ever again to lay eyes and hands and body on her, was that this child was to be worshiped before any of the other gods, that he was not to be the object of ridicule but of veneration, Ganesha would be there at each new beginning and would remove each obstacle for those who were good and place hurdles in the path of those who intended evil.

"Mine was a long apprenticeship. I accompanied my father on his rounds, learned how to count by mounting the 523 steps up into the fort, learned how to survive in this world by avoiding the paths crossed by tigers and by celebrating the importance of shade to save ourselves from the relentless sun. I noted the reverence in the gestures of my uncles as they opened each letter no matter how trite and conventional, admired the inflections of certain words, the softening of what each performer in my family had guessed were mistakes in the message, appreciated the enhancement of the term that had hit the nail on the head and needed to be emphasized. I wanted nothing more than to imitate my grandfather as he presented as best he could what was loveliest in each letter and understating those aspects which were unfeeling and could lead to unwarranted trouble. I would someday become, I told myself, the latest interpreter of desires and maladies.

"Though my father was my model, it was from my mother, at home, that I absorbed how to always put forward, on behalf of those to wed, the reasons why they deserved Lord Ganesha's protection. She was always removing obstacles from our path, was always reminding us that each day, each hour, each second is or can be a new beginning. She was the one who made my father extraordinary at his labor. Remote couples could not hope for a better man and woman to represent them.

"Over the years, I convinced myself that I was just as good as my elders. I did my best, I believed, to go even further as the ambassador of love—and perhaps the happiest day of my life is when I myself read to Lord Ganesha the invitation, a very simple and modest one, that, with my future wife, we had extended to him, would he please come to our wedding and bless us?

"I knew, of course, that my performance of the words of others—or my own words, for that matter—was no guarantee of joy in marriage, that Lord Ganesha could not do away with every obstacle or preclude that a new beginning should crumble into a sad ending. So many marriages end disastrously, so much love slips away, so many couples are solitary exercises in futility, that it would be presumptuous on my part, or the part of Lord Ganesha, if I may allow myself to speak in his name, presumptuous and arrogant to warrant that my reading of anyone's letter, in Hindi or English, was crucial to their happiness. That depended, ultimately, on them, on so many unpredictable circumstances, war and sickness and drought and human monsoons and financial

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ruin, so much that we do not control. No, of course, Lord Ganesha could not turn a marriage destined to be a sea of troubles into a bed of roses. But the fact of reading that original message aloud to that God who, because of his elephant head, was able to listen as no other entity in this or the other world can, and to do so in the very temple where the words might mingle with the words of so many of the aspiring lovers like flowers scenting the same sacred air, the very fact that a blessing had been sought for and received, was an important step in the right direction, something I could do for them without their knowing it."

At this point, Ashlesh Singh interrupted his story to sip the tea, though it had grown cold. He had till then spoken his words to the space that separated Ankur and Roshni, and had not looked either of them in the eyes. But now he did so as he repeated the words "something I could do for them without their knowing it." And then looked down again at his folded hands and recommenced.

"I am not making myself clear and I have come to clarify something, so . . . Let's put it this way: that the message was delivered did not guarantee a satisfactory outcome. But if the message was suppressed, and did not reach its destination, if it never advanced into the air breathed by Lord Ganesha and by me and my family of messengers, if the plea was aborted, well, that was to risk failure before there was a chance for success, my failure and that of the couple itself. It would have been better to let that tiger devour me when I was a child.

"So you can imagine that I have been scrupulous in my reading of those letters, working overtime to carry kilos of letters up the hill every day, often sacrificing my own life, the love of my own wife, the laughter of my own children, in order to fulfill my duty as healer of the world, be the bridge between God and men, the Lord and women, the sky in which fort and temple rise and the earth where the tigers roam and the rivers flow. I was proud of what I had been trained to do, the fact that I could not have been offered a better life, a task that better repaid how Lord Ganesha had smiled to my rescue when I was about to be eaten by the roars of a yellow and black animal. This sense of contentment, my friends, though I hesitate for reasons soon to be revealed, to call you that—that belief in the fulfillment of my life's work, the notion that our planet has been made slightly better, a little less acrimonious, by our passing through it, that we did this by carrying out well the tasks assigned by fate and talent, that peace I gently kept carrying in those messages all these years, has now been disturbed and blemished.

"You see my age, you see how gnarled are my fingers and bowed is my back. I recently retired from the post office. My four sons now continue the duty that was once my daily relief. If one is wise—and I always thought I might, through my proximity to Lord Ganesha and the three eyes in his elephant forehead which see more than anyone else could ever hope for, I told myself that perhaps a spark of wisdom would have glimmered into me—if one is wise, I repeat, as you grow old, you see the chance to renew your life, go through your mementos and memories and rid yourself of all the bric-a-brac that has cluttered our existence because we have not had the time to properly deal with each item. We have been too busy living to stop and purge our household of all the necessary litter one accumulates over the blind decades. I had spent such a long time consecrated to serving others that I had neglected to put my own life in order.

"As my dear wife and I sorted through the mess inherited from our own past, consoled in each other's company, she suddenly, one day, held up in her hands a letter which had somehow—but how? but why? but when?—lodged itself between the lips of a copy of the Upanishads.

"The frown on her face as she passed me the lost letter should have warned me that it was bad news. Not what was inside the letter, no, no, that was good, supremely moving and well written, no, no, no, what was a calamity was the physical existence of the letter itself, that it should have languished in some corner of our home rather than finding its way to the temple.

"A plea to Lord Ganesha that I had not delivered.

"A hope for the future that I had obstructed.

"An invitation to a new beginning that I had ended.

"I, me, Ashlesh Singh, I was the provider of obstacles, not the remover. I was the destroyer of new dawns, not he who welcomed them and facilitated their light rising and their dance.

"I had failed.

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"My first thought was to rush to the temple, climb each of the 523 steps on my knees, crawl up backwards and sideways and crippled and crying, and deliver, however belatedly, the words that had been patiently—or perhaps impatiently, insatiably—waiting for so long to echo in that sanctuary.

"But my wife convinced me that this would not redeem me, would not flush the stain from my life, would not return peace to me or happiness to the couple I had thwarted. You must go, my wife said, and find the man and woman you have betrayed and beg their forgiveness. You must pray they are still alive and pray even more, that they are content in each other's arms in spite of your hindrance. You must offer to guide them back here, help them to fulfill the task you have forsaken, you must find a way for them to complete their journey. That is what you must do. For their sake but also for your own, so you do not carry this impunity into the realm of death where it will weigh more heavily upon you than during life itself. Go, go—and I will make the house ready for our honored guests."

By now the old postman had started to cry.

His tears fell one by one, as if they were the 523 steps that led down from the temple, they fell on the tablecloth, they seeped into the table, they dribbled into the tea that had grown ever colder as he spoke.

For a long while, neither the husband nor the wife responded. They looked at each other in wonder, and with a tenderness they had almost forgotten could exist. As if Ashlesh Singh, by his mere presence, could return them to the words they had once woven together, the words that, it turned out, had never been dispensed, but which they both kept secluded and warm in the shared haven of their yesterdays, as if they were still writing side by side the invitation to Lord Ganesha.

"Tell me, tell me," and the postman lifted his wet face to them like a moon in the sky that hopes it will never fade while knowing it is destined to disappear, "tell me if you are happy, please tell me."

And they answered, he answered and she answered, both of them, Ankur and his Roshni, Roshni and her Ankur, neither of them needed to consult the other in order to say that yes, of course, they could not have lived a more placid existence, the postman should rest assured that he had not ruined their lives.

"Please return to your wife and thank her from us and explain that there is no need for us to come and bother her or disrupt your own well-deserved retirement."

Who said this? He or she?

It did not matter if they chanted the words separately or together because the postman knew they were only trying to comfort him, he had read too many letters of love not to realize when he was in the presence of emotional distress.

"You must come with me," he insisted, getting down on his knees, "if not for your sake, then for mine, so I can meet death and tell him that I have done all I could to leave the world a slightly better place."

They understood that they had to do the old man's bidding. Again, it was not something they needed to consult with each other. Again, it was something that was clear as water, as clear as the translucent, cascading water they had been

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for each other—to look into the pool of each other's eyes, to wash away each other's sorrows—they had been returned to deeper wells of love that had not been entirely drained away. It had been so long that such concord existed between them that they hardly remarked on the transformation that was already winding its way into their lives, the softer angels of themselves that were being resurrected by this visit.

And they had no time, indeed, to dwell upon this change, the abeyance of the war they had been waging with each other for such a forgettable time. They had more urgent things to do; they had to pack their best clothes and water the plants and phone their children that they would be leaving for a few days. But as they engaged in the insignificant chores and endeavors that would allow them to traverse the 180 kilometers to Ranthambore, they whispered to their solitary selves and perhaps to each other, the waterfall of words of the letter neither of them had seen in decades, the letter that now lay, tear stained, on the kitchen table, awaiting the fingers that had long ago closed the envelope to now open it one last time.

They did not do so.

They returned it to the postman, asked Ashlesh Singh to keep it for them until the time came to read it directly to Lord Ganesha, that way it would not be carried by one or the other but by the messenger, finally accomplishing his job, his last delivery.

And as they traveled by his side for many hours, all three were silent, concentrating on the letter that the postman had read so recently and that the husband and wife had not read since they went to deposit its contents at the post office, but that all three of them knew inside and outside and in between. The three of them, wife and husband and the man who should have been the bridge to the gods and still might be, still was acting as their guardian and protector, sweeping away obstacles and opening the portals to a new beginning, to the old beginning that had never been given a chance to become new.

And in their mind Ankur and Roshni kept practicing the words, rehearsing their order, savoring their freshness, their eternal echo within, the words that had persevered hope against hope through the years for a moment like this, one that might never come and yet had come and knocked at their door, as they realized the next day, after they had spent a dreamless sleep filled with the rumble of tigers in the nearby forest, only half sleeping really in the bed prepared by the postman's wife.

They rose the next day at dawn—nodding toward the rising light in a way that told her, told him, that they both remembered that dawn was their word, the one they still shared. Dressing each other in the brightening shadows with such care that they somehow managed not to touch one another's skin, not yet, not yet. As if their wedding night were ahead of them and not behind. And then they allowed the postman to take the hand of one and the hand of the other and take them, like children, through the forest and up the steps to Rao Hameer's Fort and only when he reached the gate of the pale pink temple consecrated to Trinetra Ganesha did he recede backward and leave a space between the couple that was filled by her hand in his, his hand in hers so they could enter together, while he hovered behind them, still holding the letter.

He was there, the God with the Face of an Elephant, waiting for them as the letter had been waiting for them all this time, the son of Shiva and Parvati, as patient as the letter itself.

They stared into his face, thought of the child who had been killed and then brought back to life with that long face and one tusk and swaying curl of a trunk, and whose consolation had been to grant the wishes of mortal men and women about to wed—or at least listen to those petitions, the God whose solace was to always receive the first offering.

Behind them the postman coughed discreetly.

He came forward, bearing the letter, offering it open and white and scribbled so they could both read it, complete his task and their lives.

Their eyes, his *netra* and hers, fell simultaneously upon the words he had written, she had written, both of them looked down upon their past and all that it held, and remembered also the sorrow of how they had been unable to honor their own dreams.

And then, just as simultaneously, just as they had perfected the letter, extracted it from within themselves, they began to speak out loud the words that were his and hers and now of the postman and his wife and also the words Lord Ganesha had been hoping to hear, the man and the woman began to repeat and invent and simply say the words of love they had once felt and now, ever so slowly, ever so surely, ever so easily, were recurring forever and ever, amen.

It is never too late.

It is never, never too late for love. ■

ARIEL DORFMAN is a Chilean American author whose books have been published in more than fifty languages and whose plays have been performed in more than one hundred countries. He contributes to major papers worldwide, including frequent contributions to the *New York Times*. He lives with his wife, Angélica, in Chile and Durham, North Carolina, where he is the Walter Hines Page Emeritus Professor of Literature at Duke University.

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The Years of Dialogue

A Review of Two Memoirs

SIDRA DEKOVEN EZRAHI

The memoirs by Stephen P. Cohen and Debbie Weissman reconstruct an optimistic time when dialogue prevailed in political and religious spheres, and resolution of ancient grievances seemed just beyond the next handshake.

In America in the late 1950s and into the 1960s, Judaism and Christianity would come to be defined in political space by Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King Jr.'s, marching together in Selma; the image we carry of that day in late March 1965 is now as iconic and out of reach as Norman Rockwell's covers for the *Saturday Evening Post*. In the cultural sphere, the same spirit was reflected in early fictions by Philip Roth, Grace Paley, and Saul Bellow celebrating what I call the "urban congregation," where Jews and Christians came together to create something uniquely American: an amalgamation that respected difference by laughing lovingly at one's own pretense, while embracing the divine image as a progressive and collective human enterprise.

In Israel, in the meantime, from the 1960s through the mid-1990s, neither Christianity nor Islam was much on the radar since the emergence of Palestinian ethnic and national consciousness embraced both, and since most of the Jewish population was not yet gripped by messianic fervor and exclusive claims, even if they didn't know or care much about the other "Abrahamic" religions (they still don't). Indeed, what we refer to as "fundamentalist" or evangelical discourse was not yet—or not again—a powerful force in America, in Israel, or in Palestine and the Arab world. The Cold War that defined the second half of the twentieth century had carved the world into competing forms of government and incompatible social contracts to which religious claims and sensibilities were subsidiary.

The years between the Six-Day War and Menachem Begin's ascent to power in Israel in 1977 would prove to be a lost decade for dialogue, negotiation, and compromise. But even as Begin and his coalition partners reintroduced an antiquated discourse based on Jewish martyrdom and theological claims, leading inevitably to racist exclusions, they did not immediately colonize the minds of the majority of Jewish Israelis or preclude political compromise; the seesaw of our expectations for a peaceful resolution of what had become the "Palestinian-Israeli conflict" kept us buoyant until Rabin's assassination in 1995.

That period, from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, filled with vision and hope, was also the time when many of us came of age and discovered our own vocations and passions. A few brave people, including Stephen P. Cohen and Debbie Weissman, put themselves into that middle space where dialogue can happen and compromise can be achieved. Disclosure: I count the authors of both books under review among my friends. The friendship with Steve was nurtured in our living rooms in Cambridge and Jerusalem; with Debbie in classrooms, conference halls, and prayer spaces, in demonstrations on pavements and sidewalks in the (bleeding) heart of Jerusalem. Both writers recount their journeys and the opportunities they seized or created to help break down the barriers between separate political or faith communities. Neither of these authors is a professional writer—but both are individuals who have made a difference "on the ground." It is for that reason these volumes make for compelling reading.

The sadder of the two volumes is the story of the dialogues and negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, brokered for a time by one solitary American Jew. In a mere 96 pages, *The Go-Between* discloses what could have been, what almost happened, and what finally failed. Steve Cohen, who died last year, was an intrepid warrior for peace who always stayed in the shadow of the public stage where adversaries postured and sparred with each other and their own constituencies in the arduous and prolonged effort to find common ground. Steve's narrative starts where so many of our stories began, as students or newly minted academics: "I was a young professor at Harvard when the Yom Kippur War broke out in 1973." Trained as a social psychologist, Steve boarded a plane to Israel, volunteered with the IDF and talked with terrified, traumatized soldiers at the front in the Sinai and on the Golan Heights.

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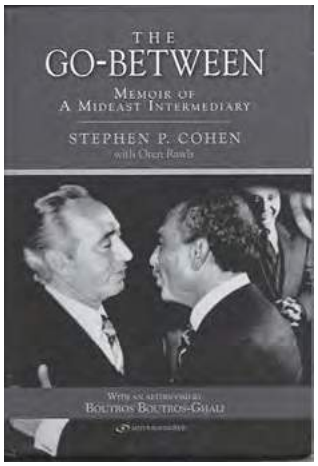
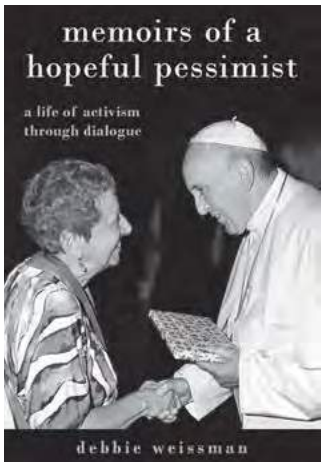
For the next three decades, Steve used the skills he had learned and some he invented to bring political adversaries together and keep them in the same room until a compromise, or at least a pledge to have the next meeting, could be reached. His narrative is related in measured, even understated, prose. Forging relations with and then between the major parties to the Israel-Palestine conflict—from Sadat and Mubarak in Egypt, to Arafat and Abu Mazen in the virtual and real spaces of Palestine, from King Hussein of Jordan to President Hafez al Assad of Syria, from Ezer Weizman to Peres, Dayan and Rabin in Israel, from American diplomats to State Department representatives in the administrations of Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton—Steve quietly gained confidence as a nonpartisan outsider who had not only access to the warring parties but also the wisdom to know what was possible at every stage and the professional skills to get there. It is telling that the Arabs and Palestinians trusted him more readily than the Israelis did; although he doesn't state this explicitly, one surmises that a kind of Israeli superciliousness accounts for initial skepticism about the political skills of a diaspora Jew. But Steve's quiet persistence wins over even the most crusty member of the Shabak and the most intransigent Israeli politician—reaching as far as the inner circles of parties like Shas when they were still open to political compromise. He takes his reader to the unlikely places where clandestine meetings were convened, from cafes to covert apartments in Paris and Brussels, from Sadat's summer palace in Alexandria to Arafat's burned-out compound in the desert outside of Tunis. He gives compelling portraits of some of the other players, such as Yossi Ginossar and Mohammed Rashid, bedeviled by their own internal politics as well as by the challenges of dialogue with the other side.

Steve knows his worth, but is meticulous in not taking credit for events and processes to which he didn't contribute: "I did not play any part in the secret discussions in Oslo," he admits, "but I knew about the talks from the start." He shares with great candor the ethical dilemmas he wrestled with when prospects for economic development for the Palestinians would have also benefited him and his family. In addition to whatever ethical dilemmas he faced, he tells his reader that "our business projects . . . were, in a word, a failure." Another failure with serious consequences was the result of Steve's overreaching: a daring initiative and meeting with Hafez al-Assad (which might have led to a peace agreement between Israel and Syria) was followed instead by Assad's fatal heart attack, and to a break with Danny Abraham, who had bankrolled many of Steve's activities.

But the achievements were monumental, even if they have remained unsung until now. The cover of this memoir reveals Steve's smiling face in the background of a promising embrace between Shimon Peres and Anwar Sadat; other photos punctuate the text with evidence of Steve's secret meetings with—and, even more importantly, the meetings he brokered





between—Arab, Palestinian, Jewish, Israeli, American, and European politicians. The Israelis included leaders both within and outside of the various Israeli coalitions. One hilarious trace of a clandestine meeting between Osama el Baz, Arafat's "principal interlocutor on the Arab side . . . trusted to protect Palestinian interests in the Arab world, and in the world at large," and Peres and Rabin at the Israeli Prime Minister's residence in Jerusalem on February 27, 1985, is the caption under the photo taken by Israeli paparazzi that appeared on the front page of the daily newspaper *Maariv* misidentified Steve as Osama el Baz; the latter had quickly concealed his face as they left the prime minister's residence so that Steve remained the only visible one. (Truth to tell, he did look a bit like an Egyptian politician.)

Actually, Steve usually managed to remain invisible to all but the participants themselves. He was always one who kept his counsel; in private conversation, one word from him was worth volumes from our more loquacious selves. Even his closest friends, who knew vaguely that he was engaged in dialogue and rapprochement, knew nothing of the details of his quest. We called him the "sphinx."

This memoir leaves us with the strong impression that without Steve and a few other brave souls who planted the seeds of an idea, Sadat might not have made his heroic trip to Jerusalem in November 1977, when he extended an olive branch directly to the war-weary Israeli people; that Arafat might not have opened the door to the Oslo process when he did, and that Rabin and Peres might not have taken those first steps toward territorial compromise for peace. At great personal risk, and often with nothing but a briefcase and a half-promise from his contacts on both sides, Steve traveled the globe, meeting and convening meetings between all the players—until a bullet put an end to the process to which Rabin had become dedicated. "By developing relationships with the Arabs, Rabin had shown his country how to secure itself peace. . . . The day Rabin was buried on Har Herzl . . .

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was the sad realization that it would be hard—very hard, if not close to impossible—to maintain those relationships without him."

Reading Debbie Weissman's memoir leaves us with a bit more hope, especially since the present occupant of the Vatican (who is photographed on the book's cover receiving a gift from Debbie in 2015) has, for the moment at least, invited us to keep that flame alive. Unlike Steve's book, which discloses almost nothing of his personal life and private struggles, *Memoirs of a Hopeful Pessimist* is more of a memoir in the classical sense; it introduces the subject with an account of the author's first experiences of interfaith dialogue, but then devotes several chapters to Debbie's ancestors, immediate family and education. It also retrieves the cultural and religious forces that impelled her to get on a plane in 1972 and travel to Israel—where she continued her training as an educator and activist. She spent time in the early 1980s running educational programs in the IDF; her higher degrees in education led to a series of teaching and administrative positions at universities and institutes of higher learning in Israel and many teaching stints abroad. Her honorary doctorate from Hebrew Union College was granted to an "innovative educator, sociologist and pioneer of orthodox feminism," whose teaching and writing in Israel and the Diaspora and commitment to dialogue between people of different faiths have had a worldwide impact.

Debbie's dialogue work began in 1988, with an invitation to attend a conference in which sixty women with different religious affiliations met in Toronto, sponsored by the World Council of Churches. Traveling the world and engaging in dialogue under the umbrella of this and other interfaith organizations, Debbie would eventually rise to become president of the International Council of Christians and Jews (the ICCJ). Her partnerships and friendships extend to Palestinian Bishop Younan and Rabbi Abraham Skorka, confidant of Pope Francis. Among her most powerful narratives is the account of an interfaith dialogue in Hiroshima, "itself a testament to human resilience and desire for life," to which the Hiroshima memorial gives concrete testimony.

Those were indeed the Years of Dialogue. While official Israeli policy on political engagement with the enemy prevented open encounters, meetings were brokered by universities worldwide under the umbrella of academic conferences and workshops. Something similar happened in the religious sphere, where it wasn't so much official policy as ignorance and some mutual suspicion that had kept the parties at arm's length. Often these meetings were spearheaded by women and featured feminist agendas alongside the political and religious ones. Again, the 1960s in America had opened up new venues of communication and encounter between Christians and Jews, but other religious groups, including Muslims and Buddhists, Hindus, Jainists, Sikhs, members of the Bahai sect, and others were still out of the ken of most of us.

The word "dialogue" is explicit in the subtitle of Debbie's book and implicit in Steve's. But what is meant by "dialogue" is significantly different. In the two decades since Rabin's assassination, it seems that all the parties to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have returned to their intransigent positions, each community has turned in on itself and dialogue has given way to a series of hermetic monologues. So it may be said that in the political sphere, if dialogue does not produce results, then it has failed. In the interfaith area, on the other hand, dialogue proceeds for its own sake. The goal is not to move anyone's boundaries or change anyone's articles of faith, not to come to an agreement on theology or doxology, but to make the face of the other available to the self.

But when ethics and politics intersect in contemporary Jewish thought, the stakes are much higher. The dialogical principle for which Talmudic scholar and philosopher

Embraced: For my Father

BY TAMARA COHEN

Midnight at a rest stop restaurant on the road between Ramallah and Jerusalem or maybe on the way back from Rafah in Gaza. You stop with Eli, your driver, and order falafel with chips and *ful* and they put too much spicy sauce on it because you nodded yes, yes, and the pita is wet with salad and tehina and it drips oil stains on your already sweaty monogrammed button-down shirt and you ask the waiter to bring more water and something sweet and he brings baklava and Turkish coffee in shot glasses and under the huge dome of night you laugh at a dirty joke with Eli and you tell him about the olives and the coffee at the place you just came from how it was better than this mud. . . . And if he knows it was in front of the home of a suspected terrorist he idled his car outside of for your two-hour meeting, he doesn't let on, and you don't tell him. Instead you tell him you are ready to return to your hotel to sleep, and what you mean, in that moment anyway, is that you are ready to be back in a New Jersey suburb in a quiet house with a lawn and your wife and daughters but then midnight melts into early morning and a warm breeze blows dust in a circle at your feet and you know you will never find life as alive as it is here at this gas station restaurant between a refugee camp and an ancient walled city of broken covenants still clung to, so you ask for another baklava and drink another shot of mud, this one for the God of huddled war-weary men eager to share with you their midnight tales, small moments when, with their guns and knives resting at the feet of their beds, they dare to imagine a way out.

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Emmanuel Levinas (whom Debbie mentions admiringly) was heralded for decades actually unravels in political time, when, after the massacre at Sabra and Shatilla in 1982, Levinas himself was unable to commit without qualification to that principle. (The complex dilemmas presented by this for all who regarded him as a beacon of the dialogical imperative in ethics and politics were discussed in this magazine by Shaul Maggid this past year [http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/shaul-magid-on-levinas-and-zionism].)

> **A guide for making peace between Israelis and Palestinians: If we can't follow Levinas's direction to see the face of God in each other, it would be enough if we could just view the Other and see a face no less human than our own.**

An insight into the principles by which Debbie guides her own behavior can be seen as she adopts a modified version of Levinas's teaching that we should see the "face of God in the Other." "It would be enough," she says, "if we could just look at the Other and see a face no less human than our own."

One of the things that brings like-minded people together while keeping "unlike-minded" people apart, creating what Mary Douglas called zones of "purity and danger," is food. One of the implicit themes of both books is the challenge of making the shared table a venue for dialogue and not mainly a display of difference or exclusion. In both narratives, food generates ingenious solutions that allow the authors to keep kosher while engaging with people of other faiths or ethnicities and avoiding giving offense to one's hosts and fellow participants. Such dialogical moments entail Steve's eating only cheese when his Arab *and* Israeli interlocutors are eating cheese and meat—while all of them share the wine in an era when strict prohibitions or restrictions on wine consumption in the respective religious communities had not yet solidified. Debbie details similar encounters, as for instance when a well-meaning friend in Denmark who assumed she wouldn't eat meat in her non-kosher home went out of her way to buy fish . . . more specifically, shrimp! But among the most touching moments in her memoir are the accounts of accommodations that Muslims, Jews, and Christians made for each other's customs—such as the interfaith Purim in Korea in 1990 and the visit to Arafat's grave in Ramallah following an interfaith conference, after which Debbie recounts heading home to prepare gefilte fish. "How many people can say that in the same day they both visited Arafat's grave and made gefilte fish? If there are such people, it's likely that I know them!"

While recounting her own journey from being a nonobservant Jew to one who is both orthodox and liberal, Debbie also documents the path that her adopted country took. She writes: "I made Aliyah to a largely secular, Left-leaning country where the kibbutz movement was disproportionately influential. I now live in a Right-wing, religious, and traditional society, where there are almost no traces left of socialism and where racism is on the rise." As one who came a decade before her, and some five years before the Six-Day War, I can attest to the modest dimensions of pre-1967 Jerusalem—the "thin one," in the words of Yehuda Amichai, whose armistice lines occluded the Temple Mount and what is peremptorily referred to by today's politicians as the City of David. Over the years, as the city's insatiable appetite grew along with its exclusivist claims to the sacred center, expanding in concentric circles deep into Palestinian east Jerusalem, came an erosion of the principles of dialogue and attentiveness to which Debbie continues to dedicate her life.

This can be seen in microcosm in the synagogue that Debbie helped to found. Kehilat Yedidya, located in the Baqa'a section of Jerusalem, functioned for many years as a center of dialogue: on the one hand, the internal halakhic dialogues that brought about changes in women's status in synagogue life, in which Debbie was a guiding spirit: on the other, the kinds of interfaith dialogue that are the overriding theme of this volume. She writes that "the founders of Yedidya built a community in which women could be first-class citizens, non-Jews could be welcome guests, issues of democracy and human rights could be taken seriously and the pursuit of peace could be recognized as a religious imperative."

For me, the most significant implementation of those principles was the dialogues and activities in which members of Yedidya took part during and after the 1988 Intifada, to which Debbie contributed. These were activities in which I, then a member of the congregation, also took an active part, along with a number of other intrepid and compassionate women (and a few men!). We maintained a daily vigil against the Occupation in front of the prime minister's residence for the better part of a year (our group, which grew out of Yedidya, and called itself "Israelis by Choice," consisted mainly of new and old "olim" from the U.S., Canada, the U.K., South Africa, and western Europe—with a sprinkling of Sabras). We also conducted an ongoing dialogue group with the adults and staged basketball games with the teenagers of Beit Sahour, a largely Christian Palestinian town east of Bethlehem. Two unforgettable events from that heady time are seared in my memory, the first being the Shabbat we celebrated in Beit Sahour, as guests of the local Palestinians. We and our families schlepped our *cholent* and our strollers from Jerusalem over

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Elaine R. Cohen

bumpy side roads, circumventing the barriers and defying our soldiers (some of whom were our own sons and daughters!), to arrive at the place where our Palestinian hosts had arranged accommodations for us and where we conducted Shabbat services with the respectful participation of our hosts; we prayed, broke bread, and shared our food and our hopes for the future. The second was Christmas Eve, 1989, when South African bishop and Nobel laureate Desmond M. Tutu came to address Israelis and Palestinians—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—in Shepherd's Field near Beit Sahour. We believed so fervently- as we stood in the very place where, some two thousand years ago, stars had guided three shepherds to the stable where baby Jesus lay- that, indeed, peace was at hand (http://articles.latimes.com/1989-12-25/news/mn-722_1_west-bank).

The Second Intifada was as devastating to the spirit of dialogue as the assassination of Rabin (and was clearly a consequence of the assassination and the forces unleashed by the change in government). Debbie exemplifies this by recalling the activities in which a number of us—including some of the founding members of Yedidya—participated in 2002, at the height of the Second Intifada, to support the residents of Jabel Mukaber, who were suffering dislocation and isolation from the placement of the insidious wall that snakes through the West Bank. But when, in 2008 and again in 2014, murders were committed in West Jerusalem by residents of Jabel Mukaber, preceded and followed by violent acts by Jewish Israelis, it became harder for Debbie and many of her fellow travelers to maintain their faith and the energy necessary to keep working for change.

Debbie marks the waning of this spirit not only in the political and social realms but also in the microcosm that is the religious community she helped to establish. She does not dwell on the political activities, or what she calls the "social-political" dimension, but notes that by the turn of the century, new immigrants coming from the West who began to join the community "tend[ed] to be far more Right-wing than those who came in the 60s and 70s." This phenomenon has meant that some "old-timers" like myself left the community in search of a more progressive incarnation of what Yedidya, and Conservative Judaism generally, once represented in the political and moral spheres in Israel, and in America.

Indeed, both memoirs reflect a more sanguine time, when Netanyahu was not yet a major player and Donald Trump was presenting problems mainly for New York's city planners and his own construction workers. But Debbie's story is ongoing while Steve's story has been buried under the recalcitrant forces that prevail in Israeli—and to some extent also in Palestinian—circles. Given the narrowing prospects for peace that have survived into the second decade of the twenty-first century, Steve's life's project can be viewed in retrospect as a serious version of Emil Habibi's satiric portrait of Saeed, the "Pessoptimist" (1974), a kind of Don Quixote who converted the enmities of those around him into goodwill gestures but was bound to be slapped down by reality. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Egyptian diplomat who became the sixth Secretary General of the United Nations, refuses to capitulate to pessimism, writing in the afterword: "Today the need for a new generation of Steve Cohens—individuals outside the traditional positions of power who are willing to commit themselves to efforts that moderate hostility and engender dialogue—is as great, and arguably greater, than it was in the years before we [Egyptians] reached peace with Israel."

By contrast, Debbie, the "hopeful pessimist," has more wind in her sails, at least for now, with Pope Francis steering the Catholic ship, even as the seas plowed by Christian evangelicals, radical Jews, and radical Muslims threaten to capsize the ship at any moment. But our mandate is to retain the hope that somewhere there are brave souls with a strong compass and strong stomachs—the generation of the grandchildren to whom Steve dedicates his little book, in the hopes that the "future [may] hold manifold opportunities for your unique contributions to make the world a better place." ■

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Frozen Out

Gentrification and Climate Change in the Bay Area

CHANTAL TOM AND AMELIA RAVITZ-DWORKIN

THE NORTH POLE, a new comedic web series focused on three friends born and raised in Oakland, CA, opens with its main characters questioning the role of new residents as they confront the gentrification of their home. This sets the tone for the series' comedic exploration of the ways race, capitalism, gentrification, and environmental issues intersect to impact people's lives. The series not only warmly invites a wide audience into a complex conversation free from judgment, but also demonstrates a new way that activists, organizers, and culture-creators can think about influencing public consciousness. The show was created in partnership with Movement Generation, a collective that works at the intersection of climate and racial justice; their work takes a justice-based approach to ecology, striving to create an economy that is ecologically sustainable and equitable. Movement Generation initially formed in response to the trend of people becoming involved in environmental justice while ignoring communities of color and vice versa. *The North Pole* is not an example of how campaigns and shifts in public consciousness can push large network television toward more equal and often shallow representation. Think *Modern Family*'s one gay couple, who are flamboyant but desexualized, or Hillary Clinton dabbing live on *Ellen* or her guest appearances on shows like *Broad City* during the 2016 election. Instead, this is an instance of grassroots organizers taking direct control over media production, and creating something that is meant to be as enjoyable to watch with friends and family as whatever Netflix show we may be binging.

This show uses narrative arc to make points that many *Tikkun* readers are familiar with, but may only encounter in dense critical texts and sensationalist or accusatory reporting. Among them: the rising cost of living and displacement of Oakland residents, two symptoms of the extractive economy, which encourages the accruement of material wealth to signify an individual's achievement of ultimate freedom and to increase excessive wealth and power for the hands of a small few. This process requires extraction of physical labor, emotional labor, and natural resources from non-ruling communities, particularly communities of color. One manifestation of this is gentrification, which Causa Justa :: Just Cause, a housing justice organization in Oakland and San Francisco, defines as "a profit-driven racial and class reconfiguration of urban, working-class and communities of color that have suffered from a history of disinvestment and abandonment." Story-based strategy is an intentional approach to movement-building which places narrative at the heart of social change. Classic elements of storytelling (i.e., conflict, characters, imagery, and foreshadowing) are applied to investigate the stories our opposition is telling and to craft our own in response. It's about creating content that envisions social change we want to see while tackling large systemic issues such as the extractive economy, displacement, greed, racism, climate change, and gentrification in a relatable way.

The genius of *The North Pole* is that it provides a heartfelt, accessible entry point into these issues. Not only does the humor and format reach a wider audience, but the character-centered narrative allows the show to bring more nuance and to uplift people's power. We are shown a reflection of a real world, with characters navigating it in their own ways, and we can easily sympathize with their approaches while simultaneously recognizing the circumstances that need to change. The series dissolves the line between personal and political issues as the group of friends struggle to hold onto their endangered culture and community in the rapidly gentrified environment, thus allowing the audience to understand the dangers of climate change and gentrification happening across the country through this specific North Oakland group. Seeing rapid and uneven development through the eyes of native residents uncovers the parallels between climate change and gentrification while illustrating the violently abrupt impact on the well-being of communities of color.

Storytelling and the web series format are used as organizing tactics to shape the narrative around these issues. Josh Healey, a writer and producer of the show and longtime creative activist, comments:

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> There's this idea that environmental issues are very separate from daily life in a city like Oakland; that's the dominant idea we've been taught in the media. That environmentalism is about the redwoods, and saving the whales, or saving the polar bears for example, and that's what we wanted to flip: the environment is all around us. Like yes, we love the redwoods and the polar bears, but we also love our neighborhoods, our communities, we love affordable housing, we love when you can walk down the street and not get beat up by the cops. This is all a part of the environment, so if we really want to change that, we have to change all of it.

The content of the show itself provides a spectrum of narratives of communities and ecological issues in dialogue with the process of gentrification. One of *The North Pole*'s strengths is providing a believable world and a narrative that actually educates while also entertaining. Current Oakland culture is steeped into every aspect of the show: the opening credits juxtapose a montage of images like BART tickets, sideshows, local art, the homeless community, and Black Panther attire with shots of luxurious artisan food, upscale baby strollers, and a menacing Monopoly board full of Bay Area locations. The very title is a reference to Mistah F.A.B.'s song "N.E.W. Oakland" and to the changing climate of North Oakland and its endangered native "Polar Bears" (North Oakland residents).

The series opens with Nina (Reyna Amaya), an Oakland native, leading her two best friends, Benny and Marcus (Santiago Rosas and Donte Clark), on a safari tour of hipsters, putting the audience in the front seat with the group of friends and introducing us to personal impacts of the gentrified environment. Nina poses the question "Are they a welcome addition to the local environment, or an invasive species?" as the group of friends jump out of their car to take a photo with a group of white Bay Area transplants outside a new coffee shop plastered with Black Lives Matter posters, highlighting the hypocrisy of gentrification in little day-to-day details and the slumming and tourism in Oakland. Later, an imaginary polar bear (symbolizing an Oakland endangered by the tides of global capitalism) leads two of the main characters to a group of new residents doing "Trap Yoga" in a public park, an example of the tone-deaf appropriation that often follows new residents in gentrifying areas. Quips like these allow white people to see themselves through a Black and multiracial gaze, while using humor to help the social criticism go down a bit easier.

When the rent is raised for the group of friends, gentrification literally knocks on the trio's front door in the form of Finn (Eli Marienthal), a naive but interested white man who's just joined a new tech company. Nina is hyper-protective of her neighborhood but low on rent money; she wrestles with whether or not to offer Finn a room in her house until Marcus, her trusted roommate, reminds her of the stark material

fate they are facing. Through surreal and relatable situations, we see how this change affects everyone in the community—from the family down the block, who is exploited and pushed to the outskirts of the Bay Area, to the tech companies who profit from it. *The North Pole* is populated with characters on all sides—the CEO at Finn's job, Marcus's family that lives far away because of the high cost of rent, and even Nina's grandmother, played by Ericka Huggins of the Black Panther Party—which contributes to a realistic world portrayal. The series focuses on a small group of people in a specific location, whose experiences also center around the larger narrative of displacement, and somehow the characters stay human and the audience stays chuckling through each ten-minute episode.

But this isn't just a TV show, it's a production specifically coordinated to build grassroots power. *The North Pole* was created in collaboration with groups like People of Color Sustainability Housing Network, Climate Workers, and Movement Generation, all of whom are doing work to transform the dynamics the show exposes. Healey reflects:

> We're trying to use the show as a way to lift up the work by groups that need more people and need more support and are doing brilliant work. . . . I think we're trying to reach beyond what's existing, we're reaching people who may not come for the issues but come to laugh. They want to see themselves. It's a different way to introduce people to these ideas. It's those ways of using humor and the stories and putting the medicine in. We don't hit you over the head with the message, we try and have you figure it out for yourself, which is a more powerful way, I think. If you let people figure it out for themselves, it sits with them in a stronger way. For me I just learned that as an organizer it's better to listen to the stories around me than to try and tell people "here's what you need to care about." This is a show deeply rooted in Oakland and the Bay Area because we're trying to listen to what's going on here.

Additionally, the production process itself is involved in building and deepening connections within the Oakland

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justice community and employing local artists. The show is a community-building project, direct action, popular education, and entertainment all at the same time. The product itself provides viewers with a more balanced representation that wittingly subverts and reshapes controlled images we're used to seeing in mainstream media. *The North Pole* is a great example of media that chooses to center the narratives of people of color while breaking away from the narrow racial tropes and representations of friendships we're used to seeing. In a world where media is saturated by homogenized images created by a few major corporations that clearly reflect their interest in maintaining current social and dominant worldviews, *The North Pole* shows up on the scene to not only offer new narratives but establish control over the means of producing them.

By taking control over the narrative, the producers of *The North Pole* provide us with entertainment that educates while inspiring change. Producer Darren Colston observes: "Art is a form of communication no matter if it's political, social, or emotional; art is communication. I want it to really communicate something that is effective and useful and out of love; I think it's necessary." Healey elaborates that the tradition and strategy of pairing action with art "is what reminds us of the humanity that we're fighting for in the first place. It's not about issues, it's not about bullet points, it's about people. That's my job as a writer and what we're trying to do with *The North Pole*. . . . You can say it's a show about three friends, their neighborhood, they're all trying to make sense of their lives and everyday stuff. . . . I think that's what art does, it hits you in your heart and your mind, and hopefully your funny bone. That's kind of the sweet spot: the heart and the mind and the raised fist, that's what you're looking for."

Progress and the fight for justice aren't always depicted as linear in the series; Nina becomes discouraged at the lack of results in her fight for her neighborhood and at the occasionally demoralizing behavior of her friends. The friends take approaches on opposite ends of the spectrum when claiming space in the gentrified environment and in the fight for environmental justice. For instance, Nina's approach is to completely change the system in a revolutionary way, while Marcus chooses to adapt and work within the system. The representation of their strained friendship highlights the diverse strategies and levels of engagement Oakland natives take to the attempted dispulsion, and starts the conversation on how to reconcile the contradictions that come with it. The show weaves together a world where we are strategically drawn into Nina's day-to-day struggle against the forces that attempt to displace. Viewers are privy to an in-depth portrayal of what organizing looks like from within a community.

The North Pole is an important moment in the movement for social transformation. Critics have long understood the importance that entertainment, media, and story have over shaping public understanding, but more and more organizers are beginning to put these concepts into practice. *The North Pole* shows us how to use a community-based process to build solidarity in a specific place, while creating media content that meets the public where they are and draws them into a complex, important, emotional, and sometimes intimidating conversation. It serves as an invitation for all of us to get more strategic about how we communicate our visions and analysis.

"Are they a welcome addition to the local environment, or an invasive species?" Ultimately, story-based strategy allows us to change the focus of this question from the individuals to the real culprit: the extractive economy. We get a clear understanding of what gentrification looks, acts, and feels like from various perspectives and different sides of the spectrum. We see how it poisons the environment and communities it touches through the microcosm of North Oakland. Like Nina, now that we know, what are we going to do about it? The viewer is left with many people to love and a sense of how global capitalism is tearing communities apart; no mean feat for a series that your neoliberal friends might actually sit through. ■

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AMELIA RAVITZ-DWORKIN was a fall editorial intern at *Tikkun* and is a senior at Mills College studying sociology with a double minor in women's studies and studio art. They are currently writing a thesis on contemporary Jewish identity in the Bay Area and faith-based activism.

Josh Healey

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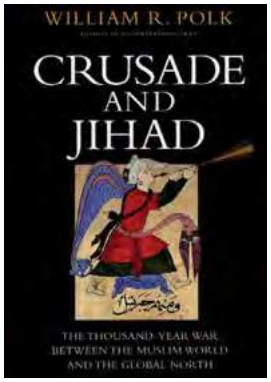
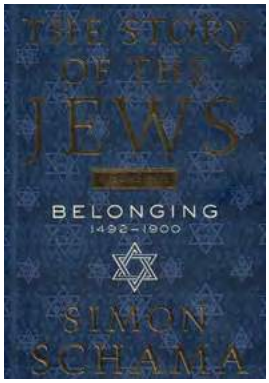
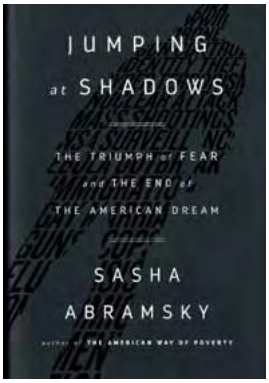


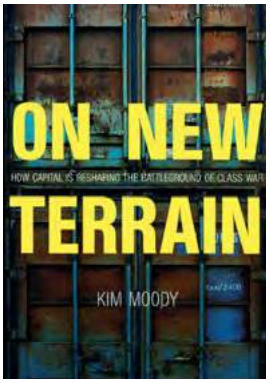
Crusade and Jihad
William R. Polk
Yale U. Press, 2017



The Story of the Jews
Simon Schama
HarperCollins, 2017



Jumping at Shadows
Sasha Abramsky
Nation Books, 2017



On New Terrain
Kim Moody
Haymarket Books, 2017

William Polk's *Crusade and Jihad* attempts to tell the story of what he calls "the thousand year war between the Muslim World and the Global North." He wisely begins with a quote from Eric Hobsbawm's essay "The Short 20th Century." Hobsbawm writes, "the destruction of the past is one of the most characteristic and eerie phenomenon of the late 20th century. More young men and women at the century's end grow up in a sort of permanent present lacking any organic relation to the public past of the times they live in." Polk has made an important contribution by reclaiming the relationship between North and South, a story he tells with mastery of the neocolonial analysis of that ongoing encounter, yet avoiding the kind of guilt-ridden worship of the oppressed that often distorts contemporary Western sensibilities. The expansion of Muslim power over most of northern Africa and the Middle East, into Turkey and parts of Eastern Europe is seen not solely as a product of military prowess but also as a result of the attractiveness to many of what Islam had to teach. Conversely the push back through the Crusades, crude and violent as it was, had some staying power because Arab societies were in conflict with each other and so some of them aligned with the Crusaders. To jump forward in his analysis to the present, Polk understands that both the North and South are deeply insecure as "violence has become the norm. The tragic fate of the refugees pouring out of Africa and West Asia, in large part the result of the breakdown of civil order" is caused first by the long history of imperialism. "A century or more of invasion, occupation, humiliation, and genocide has left scars that are still not healed , and cannot heal if they are constantly reopened" as "they were in fact by the American invasion of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Somalia, which literally tore those societies apart." The second cause of the present danger, the Israeli expulsion of the Palestinians from their homeland, was a direct outcome of European anti-Semitism which set in motion the events that led to the 'Palestinian problem'."

And that leads us to Simon Schama's 2nd volume of his history of the Jews and their struggle to belong from 1492 (when the Christians expelled them from Spain, where they had flourished under the previous Muslim rule) to 1900. Schama takes care to acknowledge that in China and India, Jews were able to find safety and to build ongoing traditions, yet in most of the world (most particularly in Christian Europe, but also in many Muslim countries and even the U.S.) Jews were rarely seen as belonging. Even in the supposed "Enlightenment" and the emergence of European countries freed from feudalism after the French revolution, the distrust and demeaning of Jews played a growing role in the history of emerging capitalist societies and the flourishing of 19th century nationalisms.

Sasha Abramsky believes that the key to understanding contemporary American society is the pervasiveness of irrational fear. Our society has helped shape the "anxious brain" which is "incapable of correctly calibrating risk. It sees the stakes at play—dead children, terror victims on city streets—but not the actual odds that these events will be visited on your child's particular school or your particular favorite restaurant or sports venue or shopping mall or sports arena." The media prioritizes terrorism over the much larger number of deaths caused by hunger, collapsing public health infrastructures, and poverty. Our task, Abramsky says, is to make our dreams of a fairer, less divisive, less fear-driven world come true. And we might add to Abramsky that if the Resistance continues to avoid developing a positive program of what it is for, and continues to focus exclusively on what is to be feared in the Trumpites, they will unwittingly contribute to the strengthening of the anxious brain.

Kim Moody addresses how capital is reshaping the battleground of class war. Moody was a founder of Labor Notes, is a member of the National Union of Journalists, and one of the leading intellectuals of the labor movement. In *On New Terrain*, Moody challenges notions of a disappearing working class and argues that recent developments in capitalist production offer new possibilities for organization in the workplace and opens doors for grassroots, independent political action. Carefully studying working class turnout in the 2016 election, Moody argues that the majority of formerly Democratic Party nonvoters were on the left of that party, and that Democrats in office showed themselves to be aligned with the elites and hence unable to implement policies that could effectively address the decline in economic security and political power not only of angry white workers, but also of Blacks and Latinos, and that is likely to remain the case as long as the Democrats are tied to the interests of the 1%.

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Trump says AMERICA FIRST

We at Tikkun say Love, Generosity, Environmental Sanity, and the Well-Being of Humanity First

To make that a reality, we have to win a lot of Americans to believe that a world of love and generosity is really possible. That's our mission. Will you join us? And quickly! Because the Trumpites are destroying the environment, bringing us to the brink of nuclear war, dismantling key support programs for middle income people and the poor, and stealing from those who have little to give to the super-rich. This is plain evil.

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