

interhelp



a networking newsletter

November 2002
Issue No. 23

Challenging Times: Late Issue, Great Contents

Yes, this November 2002 issue (#23) is the first since #22, dated December 2001. (Your subscription is extended accordingly.) The times have been challenging: the shock of 9/11 and especially our nation's responses to it; the deep divisions within the Jewish community over violence in the Middle East; the looming war on Iraq; the untimely death (assassination?) of Paul Wellstone; more time on the street than in many years, protesting corporate globalization and pre-emptive war – even a night in jail (for no intended civil disobedience); long hours listening to *Democracy Now*, *New Dimensions*, and *Alternative Radio*, and reading brilliant analyses in *The Progressive*, *YES!*, *TIKKUN*, *The Nation*, and other periodicals; long hours reading, thinking about, and responding to e-mail – getting a large dose of distressing information while being buoyed up by the thoughtfulness and dedication of so many observers.

I hate the constant overdose of electronic information, its relative impersonality, its potential unreliability, and the necessary guardedness against computer viruses. Yet e-mail has turned out to be the quintessential organizing tool for those who would heal the earth and its human society.

On top of it all, I had necessary (and highly successful) surgery in early summer. So I am sorry that you have all had to wait so long for this *Newsletter* – past time to advertise exciting events such as the superb Interhelp Facilitators Training by Judy Waldman and Mary Gleason last May and a Rowe

weekend with Joanna Macy (80 participants) followed by five weekdays attended by over 40 in October – THE place to be and share despair and intention during the Congressional “debate” on Bush’s Iraq War Resolution. (**HONOR ROLL** on page 3 lists those opposing the Resolution.)

The **NEWS** (pp. 4-5, 9-10) includes an important critique by Fran Peavey of an editor’s note in Issue 22, various accounts of individuals’ activities, workshops and writings, as well as letters of appreciation for past Gatherings, the Newsletter, and the Interhelp network in general. Even though some of these are nearly a year old, they have not lost their point. There is additional correspondence initiated by Mary Gleason under the title **HELP! IS HOPE POSSIBLE?** on page 10.

We bring excerpts from a fine 125-line poem by Christian McEwen, intended to be read one line in turn by participants in memorial observances for September 11 (page 6). E-mail us for the entire text. Also an essay on the Flag by Michael Rice and “The Pledge” by Greg Mott (pp.8).

We must wait for the next issue to bring a review by Craig Richards of *Nonviolent Communication* by Marshall Rosenberg, and, in response to Judy Conrad’s suggestion in the MAIL, the description of several exercises at the 2002 Gathering.

If you read nothing else in this issue, please be empowered by Rosalie Anders’s **Lesson in Effective Political Action** on page 2.

Workshop Report: A Lesson in Effective Political Action

by Rosalie Anders

Recently Craig Richards led a Joanna Macy-inspired exercise for the Boston area Buddhist Peace Fellowship in which we considered our feelings about events since Sep. 11. Anger, fear, bitterness, hatred, self-righteousness, despair were among the feelings I identified right away – feelings directed not just toward al Qaeda and the Taliban, but toward my own government as well. In fact my anti-US government feelings were in some ways the strongest.

I struggle with these feelings, believing that they are not appropriate bases for action. Craig guided us to help each other look at what lies behind such feelings and recognize that the negative feelings may arise from concern for ourselves and for others. What might be behind my fear, anger, even hatred? Many things, of course, among them love and compassion for my family, for myself – and for all the people and places and institutions I don't want to see destroyed. If we didn't love our family or our nation, how much would we fear for their future? How deeply angry would we be at people we see as threatening them? Becoming more mindful that the well from which my anger and hatred spring contained love of family and friends in New York City and love of the civil liberties our nation has enjoyed helped me criticize myself less for my "bad" feelings. It also, of course, let me feel more compassion toward the targets of my anger, hatred, and fear. I could better understand that behind their acts of destruction lie many impulses, including impulses of compassion, a desire to survive, love of their culture, their country.

At the same time, I can recognize how counterproductive their acts of revenge are, how such acts on both sides lead to greater destruction of the things they love. The world is complicated, after all, and all our deeds have unintended consequences. To me history shows that acts taken out of anger, fear, or hate are likelier to work against us than are acts taken out of love or compassion.

Years ago, I had an experience that brought that home to me. During the Vietnam War, I lived in New York, London, and Santa Cruz; in all three cities I was active in the antiwar movement. In all three, the movement tended to be uncompromisingly confrontative, fueled by anger and hatred toward our government. Marchers shouted, "One side's right, the other side's wrong, victory to the Viet Cong." I shared

the anger and hatred – my sister's fiancé and a high school friend were among the people I knew who'd been killed in that staggeringly stupid war. At the same time I often felt uncomfortable with the rhetoric of hate that some protestors used.

We moved to rural western Massachusetts in 1972. Antiwar activity there was different from what we'd been used to – gentler, somehow, though just as committed. The tone was set in large part by the Traprock Peace Center, a Quaker center in Deerfield. Our local peace group focussed on vigils, educational events, letters and op-eds, conversation, and lobbying. The major lobbying target was Silvio Conté, our Republican congressman. We bird-dogged him persistently, but politely, even affectionately. He sometimes got annoyed with us, and we with him, but the tone of our relationship was respectful.

Eventually, Conté changed his mind about the war and co-authored legislation to stop funding it. Because he was the ranking minority member of the House Appropriations Committee, his action had a powerful effect. The legislation passed, a vote of no confidence that the President could not ignore, and the war was doomed.

About a year later I ran into Conté at a restaurant in North Adams. He waved me over. "I hope you realize," he said, "that it was you people – you peace people – who convinced me that the war was wrong." He went on to speak of the integrity of the protestors and the respect we'd shown him. We had kept the dialog open, enabling him to consider our views and reexamine his own more easily than he might have if we'd behaved differently.

Conté's change of heart was lasting. In 1991 he was one of just three Republicans to vote against giving President Bush the power to go to war with Iraq, expressing dismay, as he did so, that the President had not pursued diplomatic measures instead.

From Conté I learned that acting from respect and compassion can pay off. My lesson from the exercise at the Buddhist Peace Fellowship was that instead of engaging in futile efforts to erase my feelings of anger or hate I can recognize that they spring from caring, and tapping into that caring can help me act with more compassion.

Honor Roll: In Memory of Paul Wellstone

The plane crash that killed Paul and Sheila Wellstone and their daughter along with three campaign workers and two pilots October 25, 2002 robbed us of the most authentic human being in the entire Senate – the least distorted by the trappings of political power, as well as the most courageously progressive. As others have noted, Paul’s service in the Senate was bracketed by his first and last votes, against war on Iraq, in 1991 and 2002. It was no wonder that over 20,000 mourners at his memorial service felt this as a highly personal loss and at the same time redoubled their commitments to Paul’s issues.

The week of October 6 saw the House of Representatives vote 296-133 and the Senate 77-23 in favor of a resolution authorizing the President to wage a pre-emptive war against Iraq. The dissenters in the House included one independent (Sanders), six Republicans (Indicated by “R” in the list below), and 126 Democrats defying their leader, Dick Gephardt. Some observers treated it as a victory that the magic number of 300 votes supporting war was not reached. A small number not voting helped achieve this “victory.” The dissenters in the Senate included one independent (Jeffords), one Republican (Chafee) and 21 Democrats defying their leader, Tom Daschle.

In the view of the editor, the policy of pre-emptive war has no logical endpoint. No nation with oil or other natural resources coveted by our leaders can feel safe from U.S. weapons of mass destruction. No leader of a sovereign nation, whether freely elected or imposed on his people by force of arms (or even by “us”), can feel safe from demonization and assassination either by our leaders or by individuals aggrieved by our policies, when this new lawlessness is implemented. The new policy licenses India pre-emptively to attack Pakistan and Pakistan to attack India – it is a return to the law of the jungle. And the policy increases rather than limits the threat of terrorism.

What those whose votes were intended merely to strengthen our nation’s hand in U.N. and multi-lateral “negotiations” actually did, I believe, was to

furnish the president an extortionist’s gun, a suicide grenade to blow up the very process of deliberation and lawfulness.

Below are the names and states of those Senators and Representatives that voted against yielding this power to this president.

Senators Akaka (HI), Bingaman (NM), Boxer (CA), Byrd (WV), Chafee (RI), Conrad (ND), Corzine (NJ), Dayton (MN), Durbin (IL), Feingold (WI), Graham (FL), Inouye (HI), Jeffords (VT), Kennedy (MA), Leahy (VT), Levin (MI), Mikulski (MD), Murray (WA), Reed (RI), Sarbanes (MD), Stabenow (MI), Wellstone (MN), Wyden (OR).

Representatives Hilliard (AL), Pastor (AZ), Snyder (AR), Baca (CA), Becerra (CA), Capps (CA), Condit (CA), Davis (CA), Eshoo (CA), Farr (CA), Filner (CA), Honda (CA), Lee (CA), Lofgren (CA), Matsui (CA), Millender-McDonald (CA), George Miller (CA), Napolitano (CA), Pelosi (CA), Roybal-Allard (CA), Sanchez (CA), Solis (CA), Stark (CA), Thompson (CA), Waters (CA), Watson (CA), Woolsey (CA), DeGette (CO), Udall (CO), DeLauro (CT), Larson (CT), Maloney (CT), Brown (FL), Hastings (FL), Meek (FL), Lewis (GA), McKinney (GA), Abercrombie (HI), Costello (IL), Davis (IL), Evans (IL), Gutierrez (IL), Jackson (IL), Lipinsky (IL), Rush (IL), Schakowsky (IL), Carson (IN), Visclosky (IN), Hostettler (R, IN), Leach (R, IA), Allen (ME), Baldacci (ME), Cardin (MD), Cummings (MD), Morella (R, MD), Capuano (MA), Delahunt (MA), Frank (MA), McGovern (MA), Neal (MA), Olver (MA), Tierney (MA), Bonior (MI), Conyers (MI), Dingell (MI), Kildee (MI), Kilpatrick (MI), Levin (MI), Rivers (MI), Stupak (MI), McCollum (MN), Oberstar (MN), Sabo (MN), Thompson (MS), Clay (MO), McCarthy (MO), Holt (NJ), Menendez (NJ), Pallone (NJ), Payne (NJ), Udall (NM), Hinchey (NY), LaFalce (NY), Meeks (NY), Nadler (NY), Owens (NY), Rangel (NY), Serrano (NY), Slaughter (NY), Towns (NY), Velasquez (NY), Houghton (R, NY), Clayton (NC), Price (NC), Watt (NC), Brown (OH), Jones (OH), Kaptur (OH), Kucinich (OH),

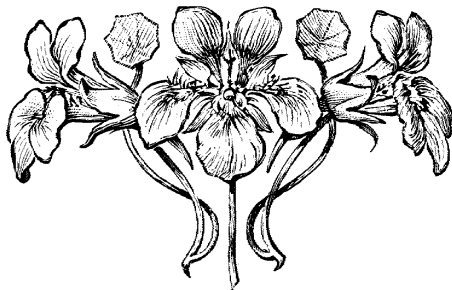
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Honor Roll (continued)

Sawyer (OH), Strickland (OH), Blumenauer (OR), DeFazio (OR), Hooley (OR), Wu (OR), Brady (PA), Coyne (PA), Doyle (PA), Fattah (PA), Langevin (RI), Clyburn (SC), Duncan (R, TN), Doggett (TX), Gonzalez (TX), Hinojosa (TX), Jackson-Lee (TX), E.B.Johnson (TX), Reyes (TX), Rodriguez (TX), Paul (R, TX), Sanders (VT), Moran (VA), Scott (VA), Baird (WA), Inslee (WA), Larsen (WA), McDermott (WA), Mollohan (WV), Rahall (WV), Baldwin (WI), Barrett (WI), Kleczka (WI), Obey (WI).

Two encouraging aspects of the Congressional action were these: first, Senator Robert Byrd attempted (unsuccessfully) to obtain collegial support for a filibuster, since even those who chose to believe the administration's argument that Iraq posed a danger knew that such danger was remote in time and that the only reason for taking it up before the election was as a "weapon of mass *distraction*" from the real election issues. Byrd specifically referred to the 1964 Tonkin Gulf resolution that effectively authorized President Johnson to wage war on Vietnam, saying he wished he had joined Senators Morse and Gruening to make a third Senator against that Resolution. Second, the head count against was a great deal larger than the 2 Senate votes against war on Vietnam.

Personally, your editor would rather lend his car keys to a habitual drunk than vote to elevate a Congressperson not on this honor roll to higher office. Unfortunately, those missing from this list (i.e., granting Bush the right to go to war) include presidential hopefuls Rep. Gephardt and Senators Daschle, Biden, Kerry, Edwards, Lieberman, and Clinton.



News From the Network

Tova Green wrote: I've been at Tassajara since September 2000. Tassajara is a monastery connected to San Francisco Zen Center. About 45-60 Zen students practice here from September to April, when Tassajara is closed to the public. From April to September, we take care of guests who come for workshops, retreats, or vacations. I can now make soup or pasta or poppy seed cake for 60 without fear. I am preparing to be ordained as a Zen Priest, hoping that, by following this path, I may be of benefit to the whole world. We'll see!

Rich Baydin wrote: My participation with Interhelp in the 1980s was a glorious experience – I'd say an epiphany! The vulnerability, sense of openness and intimacy, the creativity, and the sadness mixed with joy, hope, commitment and vision made for heart spirit links and empowerment.

I am a lifelong political spiritual activist and poet envisioning world ecology, world community, and world peace. And a sense we humans hungering for humanity and the one family of humans need an uplift and jumpstart of genuine self-esteem and an all-out uprising of love!!

I would appreciate any materials on what has been the focus of Interhelp recently, any writings, info on creating a local Interhelp base community, and what's on the agenda for the February annual Gathering.

Finally, I live in Natick, MA and desire to know any locals in the Natick/Framingham area! Tel: 508-647-3770

Fran Peavey left this message on my answering machine: Good Newsletter [December 2001, #22]. I have a little complaint. I was thinking I have to write you and tell you what a great Newsletter this is until, on page 7, I came upon an Editor's Note. I think in our network people should not be surprised at the open-mindedness of people, and I don't think it's political correctness. I think calling open-mindedness political correctness marginalizes it, and I object to your editor's note there. But otherwise it's a great newsletter. Thanks for sending it.

Touché! I have always admired Fran Peavey as the exemplary true believer in democracy. I've never been able to muster Fran's level of trust that people, given the barrage of consumerist, corporatist, militaristic and "Christian" propaganda to which they are exposed, will naturally arrive at open-mindedness. My jaded view goes back to repeated experiments of (unsuccessfully) seeking signatures on a "petition" that is in fact nothing but the Declaration of Independence of one or another of the Constitutional

News From the Network

Amendments we call the Bill of Rights, and, of course, to the popular jingoism every time a war is announced. But I am sure that Fran's success as a social change agent comes in part from her recognition that, just below the surface, most people are intensely open-minded and desirous of peace and sustainability. I was plainly wrong in suggesting the possibility that the evident open-mindedness of the high school students in rural Vermont might be a case of "political correctness." I was intensely thrilled by their evident open-mindedness despite the lack of effort to recruit exceptionally open-minded students.

Gertrud Kauderer (to whom I had e-mailed the full text of "I Weep") e-mails: I want to thank you for this wonderful poem. In the meantime, I received the newsletter with the abbreviated poem. It was so inspiring to read the articles. I read about so many familiar names from the time when I was traveling with the Peace Caravan. To feel connected with those people is a great help in these times when it is considered anti-American to be against the "war on terrorism".

Jonathan Clyman wrote: Thank you for all your work and inspiration.

Marney Bruce wrote: You sent me my first Interhelp newsletter after we both attended the Northwest Earth Institute national training in September 2000. Thank you so much!

I thought I would give you an update of what I'm doing. I am still involved in the simplicity movement and I am the Maryland coordinator of the Potomac Valley Earth Institute. Recently leaders of various simplicity efforts in my area (Maryland suburbs of D.C.) got together and we are offering simplicity forums on the third Sunday of each month. January was our first, and thirty-five people showed up. That's a lot more than we expected for the first time out! On February 17th we are offering a short program on "Inner and Outer Clutter – A Metaphor." On February 16th, a day-long program on practical simplicity will be offered which covers topics such as energy use, home and kitchen resources, food, and frugality. The ripples are going out and we are reaching more and more people.

Thank you for all your good work!

ML. Healey wrote: I'm so glad I finally got to an Interhelp Gathering. I hope to become an annual fixture.

Alexandra Kedrock wrote: Please note my new address!! I love getting your newsletter!

Barbara Hazard wrote: I'm still spending 2-3 months a year in St. Petersburg, Russia. This May I'll have a show of my art in the museum at the Foundation for Free Culture there. I'm going with my daughter, Katherine, to Kazakstan again, where she plans to adopt two more babies. All well. Turned 70 in December.

Lois Booth wrote: We enjoyed another soul-refreshing time when we went to Eleanor Mathews' birthday party. The news is really bad these days. I'm glad that many major newspapers slammed the Bush nuclear proposals. I was surprised and delighted that the Globe printed the enclosed letter that I wrote for our 20/20 program and many people signed:

President Bush is destroying the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in order to go freely ahead with a large national missile defense programs. Should we care?

"Yes." says Dr. Robert Bowman, the retired Air Force lieutenant colonel who was director of missile defense programs under Presidents Ford and Carter. "The ABM Treaty was designed to do two things – preserve conditions in which the arms race could be slowed and eventually reversed and prevent the development of weapons that would reward an aggressor for shooting first. It has succeeded at both these tasks. Its continued existence is essential for the same reasons."

Many have warned that a missile defense program would stimulate a new arms race. Less understood is how it would encourage a first-strike attack.

Consider China's position. So far it has been content with a deterrent of 20 nuclear weapons. The Bush "multi-layered" missile defense plan would build some anti-missiles near the United States to prevent enemy missiles from landing and at the same time would build a ring of missiles close to China and other targeted nations.

But those US missiles could be used in a first-strike attack to destroy China's 20 nuclear weapons while the United States simultaneously fired long-range missiles at their cities. The United States would have an enormous military advantage.

Like the Soviet Union in the past, China would feel it must build many more weapons and probably include submarines that could sit outside our shores and threaten us. Whoever struck first would have the advantage. Just thinking about the risks in a tense diplomatic situation is enough to make your blood run cold.

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SEPTEMBER 11th

*A Poem by Christian McEwen – intended to be read, one line in sequence,
by participants in memorial observances (excerpts).*

*The city for the first time in its long history is destructible. A single flight of
planes no bigger than a wedge of geese can quickly end this island fantasy.*
– E.B. White, 1949

The one who was walking down 12th Street when the plane flew over.
The one who climbed down 44 flights of stairs, tread by slow tread.
The one who went to work, even though it was his birthday.
The ones who were sending money home to Russia, to Mexico, to Ecuador.
The ones who were told it was safe, and went obediently back inside.

The one who took his son to school that day.
The one who bent to kiss her baby in his stroller.
The one who kept calling the *New York Times*, hoping somebody could save him.
The ones who pressed to the windows waving their white shirts.
The ones who crowded into the elevator, and went hurtling down.

The ones who stumbled out under the wide blue sky.
The one who snapped his last photo of the falling debris.
The one who'd been working as a temp, for five days only.
The one who sat on the sidewalk, bleeding.
The one who screamed for her teacher, "Look, the birds are on fire!"

The one who tracked down her brother in his empty apartment.
The ones who couldn't get through however hard they tried.
The one whose mother reached her in Maine blazing with anxiety.
The ones who were driving through Portugal, and didn't hear the news.
The ones who knew absolutely they were going to die.

The one who stopped on the stairs to help an unknown man called Victor.
The ones who kept saying it was like a movie.
The one who stood by his office window and watched the bodies falling.
The one who fell head first, his legs crooked like a dancer.
The two who jumped to their deaths holding each other by the hand.

The one who'd worked in that building for 25 years.
The one who went on working past retirement.
The one who was so proud to be a broker, finally.
The one who kept on singing till they found her.
The one who was on the 88th floor when it came down, and still survived.

The ones who gathered with their families on the roof-tops.
The ones who just happened to turn on the television.
The ones who huddled in a friends' car, listening to the radio.
The ones who saw a pink mist rising from the ground.
The ones who pushed back up the stairs when everyone else was pushing down.

The ones who used their cell-phones to call and say goodbye.
The one who rang from the 105th floor, to say that he and dad were going to be just fine.
The one who called his mother, very calm, and then suddenly started screaming.
The one who said, "Be brave. Take care of our daughter. I love you."
The one who kept thinking over and over, "But it's such a beautiful day."

...

The ones who hung flags in every window.
The ones who said, "Our grief is not a cry for war."
The one who burst into tears right on Sixth Avenue.
The ones who ate in their favorite restaurant, with surgical masks pulled down around their necks.
The ones who went bird-watching in Central Park.

The one who drove 18 hours from Florida to find her daughter.
The ones who waited in line for hours.
The ones who brought strands of hair from their loved ones' brushes.
The ones who put up posters: "Missing. Our Cousin. A hero among heroes. If you've seen him, please call or pray."
The ones whose candles flickered in their tall glass jars.

...

The ones who spoke Spanish, the ones who spoke German.
The ones who spoke Japanese.
The one who carried an enormous heart-shaped flag.
The ones who cried and prayed and hugged their children.
The ones who stood in silence, gazing through the wire, counting the lost stories back up into the sky.

The Flag and Two Slogans

by Michael Rice

I came with my mother to the safety of these shores from Nazi-occupied Holland and war-torn Germany in the Spring of 1941, just in time to escape deportation and probable death in a concentration camp. I am grateful, of course, for my American refuge. And I admire many of the ideals embodied in the founding documents of my adopted country, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights. I have been unflagging (pun intended) in my defense of these ideals, in my efforts to bring American practice into conformity with American ideals.

I wish I could believe that flying the flag was a celebration of those ideals – then I could fly it with joy and pride. Perhaps those who choose to fly the flag on the Fourth of July do so to celebrate the Declaration. But many who fly it seem to have forgotten the founding documents, and are only too willing to give up the freedoms these protect; thus the USA PATRIOT Act had the support of all but one Senator.

We owe our freedom not to wars but to our *exercise* of freedom, our *participation* in determining our lives and the policies of our nation. The waving of the flag is often the symbol of nationalism, of our *abdication* of our exercise of freedom to “leaders” – “chicken hawks” who send others to fight – rather than a symbol of our nation’s highest ideals. The intention and context in which many people fly the flag today seems to be a celebration of war, of the notion that “we” owe our “freedom” to the sacrifices of soldiers, to the killing of “enemies.”

Context is everything. Our nation’s military actions secure corporate economic interests, such as those of oil companies rather than our freedoms. I admired a use of the flag at the “Another World Is Possible” demonstration in New York City on February 2, 2002, protesting the meeting of the World Economic Forum: side-by-side were two versions of the flag, one with 50 stars – the ordinary flag – with a large YES emblazoned above it, and the other with multinational corporate logos where the stars belong, with a large NO above it. This use *reclaimed* the flag of our highest ideals from those who (in league with the WEF) would

corrupt these ideals on behalf of national and global domination by unaccountable, self-enriching profit machines.

“God Bless America”

God – the Breath of Life, the Life Force, the Creative Principle, the Spirit of the Earth, the source of Meaning – HAS blessed America with remarkable diversity of species and geography and micro-climates, soil fertility, water sources, and natural resources of all kinds. Our task is to appreciate these gifts, to show our gratitude by using them respectfully and sustainably, not abusing and polluting them. It is NOT our task to ask for MORE blessings, particularly when they imply pain to others.

I remember the shock I felt at a high school assembly the day before the traditional Thanksgiving Day football game – it must have been 1944 or 1945 – when Coach Paul Jenkins led the entire Male High School in a PRAYER that Male would be beat Manual High in the game. (This experience comes to mind whenever I hear the Commandment “Do not take the name of God in vain.”) Mark Twain displays a similar sense of outrage at this thoughtless misuse of “prayer” in his magnificent diatribe, “The War Prayer.”

“United We Stand”

This slogan brings to mind the American Revolution as well as the struggles of organized

labor. It also brings to mind the way sheaves of grain stalks bundled together can stand whereas a single stalk would fall over. I believe some old U.S. pennies had such a sheaf depicted on one side. Such sheaves, or *fascies*, were the emblem in Italy of Mussolini’s political party, which therefore called itself the *fascist* party. A critical aspect of a sheaf is the twine or the flexible straw that binds the straws together. Do we generate our unity out of love and respect for each other and our world – which might be captured in the phrase *e pluribus unum*, out of many, one – or do we play the role of inert straws, with the twine in the hands of a Leader?

The Pledge

by Greg Mott

i pledge allegiance to the greed
of the corporations of america,
and to the plutocracy by which it stands,
the one and only,
almighty, and
invincible,
with liberty, and justice, for the winners.

or

i pledge allegiance to the earth
and all that lives upon her
and the delicate balance in which it all stands;
one planet,
alive with spirit,
harmonious;
with deep respect for all.

News From the Network

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Judy Conrad wrote on January 16, 2002: Dear Council of Dear Ones, I will miss you at this year's Gathering. As most of you know, I am still reeling from multiple personal losses the last few months. The Gathering has always been a "touchstone" of my emotional and spiritual growth. This will be my 18th year of D&E work.

The creative energy of the Gatherings with the Council-as-a-whole as facilitator has been a "power-with" example *par excellence*. I believe the rituals we create could be a wonderful contribution for the whole network – a booklet perhaps, or published in the *Newsletter*.

My deep ecology support group is sponsoring a six hour D&E Intro Workshop through Cabin Fever University: a community project of in-home winter education and entertainment. Anyone can offer – everything from ping-pong tournament to shape-note singing is on the schedule.

Jon Spayde's article in the Jan-Feb '02 *Utne Reader*, "Tough Doves, Tender Warriors," spoke to my grieving heart.

Have a wonderful Gathering. May the spirit of these ancient / Mountains ground us in the / Moments we share on this / Beautiful planet.

More recently, Judy wrote: I now have a support group after all these years. We meet once a month. I'll enclose the "After 9-11" workshop we sponsored in March. We had 12 people from around the region. (See Note, below.)

If it feels appropriate, there is a suggestion I would make for folks like us who are trying to bring "the work" to the "hinterlands." The essence it seems to me of Interhelp is providing support. Yes, we can give workshops but the follow-up, the continuation is difficult. Would it be possible for the Council to consider re-publishing *Keeping Us Going: A Manual on Support Groups for Social Change Activists* (1986)?

My life is centered around homesteading. The garden got off to a slow start with a late freeze the third week in May. My little "holler" was hit pretty hard – even the tulip poplar trees, in full leaf, turned brown. It looks like there will be no grapes or raspberries this year. The locals call this "blackberry winter." The only crops I had to replant were corn and beans. With Steve gone, I had doubts about how much I would be able to do. I'm holding my own, with almost as big a garden as last year. I have been hiring a neighbor to cut the lawn. I was able to manage in early spring with the reel push mower, before major gardening activity started. But it just became too much. My life is

gardening. It has become my antidote to anxiety and hopelessness. I work two days a week and homestead five. This includes: carrying 8 gallons of water about 10 trips from the creek to the garden for watering; transporting trash to the dump; transporting drinking water from the spring a mile away. My body is stronger than it has been in ten years or more! I only go to town once a week. It is about 10 miles away. Neighbors have been letting me borrow their washing machine for laundry. Oh, the pleasure of hanging laundry to dry, the clean fresh fragrance of air and sunshine in my undies. My main entertainment is reading and contemplating the infinite beauty of the sights, sounds and fragrance of Mother Earth.

It is the first anniversary of the clear-cutting on the Surry County Farm. My deep loss and grief are ever present. I have been unable to return there since last August. I am just beginning to let go of blaming-hating my mother for allowing it to happen. I saw her the first time since Thanksgiving on Friday. My intention was to discuss the farm (she has never responded to four letters). But my tears and deep grief and fear were so close to the surface I could not bring it up. And, of course, she ignored the subject.

It is my intention to return to the farm within the month to put up a permanent sign on the property with Chief Seattle's quote: "If you buy our land, love it and care for it as we have loved it." Hopefully two friends will go with me.

Note: the description of the one-day (10 AM – 5 PM) workshop Judy's support group sponsored, "After 9-11: Being Community, Sharing Our Sorrows" is so exemplary, I will enclose excerpts:

Purpose: This gathering will give us a chance to thoughtfully share how our lives have changed since 9-11. Jon Spayde's article "Tough Doves, Tender Warriors" [UTNE Reader, Jan-Feb 2002] inspired this gathering.

Framework: The philosophical perspective used will be the work of Joanna Macy and the Interhelp Network. This perspective is a marriage of the despair and empowerment work of hospice with deep ecology, Buddhist thought and systems theory. These words based on the thought of Thich Nhat Hanh poetically describe this pathway: "Let us hear the sounds of the earth crying until our pain and joy are one, reuniting us with the interconnectedness of all life."

Experiential Interactions Used: We will use small and large group sharing, active listening, silence, simple ritual, meditations, dance, music, nature walking and candle lighting.

News From the Network

Corbie Mitleid wrote: Just a note to let you know, in the spirit of community and Lightworkers helping Lightworkers, I'm posting your Interhelp Gathering information on the Events page of my website, www.firethroughspirit.com. I invite you to take a look! Fire Through Spirit is devoted to self-healing and self-empowerment using alternative, intuitive and spiritual methodologies, both for individuals and the world at large.

I would appreciate your placing Fire Through Spirit on your mailing list, so we can keep up with the good work you are doing.

Additionally, I am always looking for new contributors to the website . . . There are a number of us in the outlying areas of the Capital District [Albany, NY area] in general and the Schoharie Valley in particular who are beginning to coalesce our efforts to connect with the greater peace and spirituality community.



HELP! IS HOPE POSSIBLE?

Mary Gleason wrote in a March 27, 2002 e-mail titled "Help":

Friends,
I am so increasingly despondent over the state of the world that I feel like I am sinking. I feel shards of hope and then they dissolve. I don't want to sink into the wonderland of denial so I try to stay present to what is true in the world, yet I am in one of those states of feeling overwhelmed, similar to the immediate aftermath of 9/11. How are other people feeling? If others are feeling despair, how are you dealing with it, how are you bringing yourself to empowerment?

Thanks, love, Mary

Michael Rice responded:

I share your pessimism but I am full of hope. In large measure my hopefulness comes directly out of letters just like yours. For several years I have preached from Joanna Macy's script on The Great Turning, but your letter makes me realize how poorly I have internalized parts of it.

Briefly, The Great Turning is a testament of hope based on a triad of observations: that there has been an avalanche of Holding Actions in the areas of legislation, regulation, agitation (I think, for example, of the Seattle protests and their sequels); that a high quality of Systemic Analysis and Models of Sustainability (such as Community Supported Agriculture) is being developed; and that a spiritual Consciousness Shift is engaging increasing numbers of people....

Many of the gains won through holding actions – real environmental laws and enforcement, international agreements (e.g., Kyoto, however weak that was), diminution

(but alas, not abolition) of the nuclear stockpiles – are under the most serious threat ever.... Bill McKibben writes, in *Hope, Human and Wild*, "A few months after the Clinton administration took office, I interviewed Vice President Al Gore, and he said . . . 'We are in an unusual predicament as a global civilization. The maximum that is politically feasible, even the maximum that is politically *imaginable* right now, still falls short of the minimum that is scientifically and ecologically necessary.'" And it is clear to me that the gap between political feasibility and ecological necessity has grown much wider in the intervening nine years. It is therefore ever more difficult to engage in holding actions *with the expectation of short-term success*.

My hopefulness arises in part from the quality and quantity of the systemic analysis that has emerged, especially since 9-11, in relation to war and terrorism; human rights; militarism and nationalism; nonviolence; economic and military imperialism; the excesses of technology, particularly gene manipulation and the patenting of life forms. [Note: since writing this reply to Mary, I have read "A Fist in the Eye of God" in *Small Wonder* by Barbara Kingsolver, which is the best and most readable essay on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture.] The substance of this analysis is mostly discouraging: it identifies what is wrong with great precision. But much of this analysis is value-based and transcends the usual finger pointing or choosing of sides on the one hand and a doctrinaire embrace of a political or religious orthodoxy on the other. It encourages consciousness raising and supports holding actions *engaged in because they are right and without attachment to obtaining results in the short run*.

My greatest source of hope comes from my own gradual consciousness shift, my awareness of being part of a larger self, that my sense of meaning derives from relationship, connectedness – with the crocuses, the bright sun,

last Tuesday's rain. I am overwhelmed by awe at the beauty and resilience of nature and am so very grateful to be living. At one and the same time I see myself as wholly irrelevant to the future course of the world and as totally necessary to it. I feel compelled to bear my own witness (be it a celebration of the equinox, a protest against corporate globalism, editing the Interhelp Newsletter, or maintaining a garden) whether or not it has any measurable impact on the current dreadful state of the political world.

We asked if Mary had received other responses; she had no copies except, as follows, in her remembering:

I don't have them, alas! Because they were beautiful. I internalized them – read them and started to try to do them. Sondra spoke of her deep love for her grandson and her message was laced through with that – that intense fierce love, and somehow from her message I saw the hope and healing that are inherent in children. Rosalie said that every day she tried to draw something that she sees when walking: I imagined her picking up a stone or a leaf and giving it her full devotion as she drew it. Again ... love ... and hope. Paul Lipke talked of paying attention and having a daily practice. He also said you should be spending at least as much time reading inspiring things as you do reading the news. A person from Quaker meeting mailed me a package of seeds, with a note which said "Cry your eyes out, then plant the seeds." These beautiful, loving and wise messages all become woven together for me – like a poem about paying loving attention, toward oneself and others (including the other-than-human others), as a practice for keeping hope and joy alive.

Interhelp is an international network of people who share their deepest response to world conditions that threaten human life and the earth. We help one another within our own communities to move through feelings of isolation and hopelessness to empowerment and action. We offer community gatherings and training in despair and empowerment, deep ecology, and personal support systems. We try to integrate deep social concern (and support social activism), personal psychological growth, and our recognition of a nonsectarian spiritual core.

The Interhelp Council

Rosalie Anders, Mary Gleason,
Rick Gottesman, Eleanor Mathews,
Kristina Orchard (Secretary/Treasurer),
Michael Rice (Newsletter Editor),
Emily Sack, Sondra Sprinkling (Chair),
Carl Todd, Judith Waldman.

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PLEASE SEND US: *personal news as well as articles or reviews for publication in the Newsletter (as text within e-mail to: risprin@attglobal.net); or a personal note for the editor to share with members of the Interhelp Council; and a contribution as follows:*

_____ I enclose a contribution of ___ \$5 ___ \$10 ___ \$25 for the next 4 issues of the Newsletter

_____ I contributed recently; please keep sending me the Newsletter

_____ Please keep sending me the Newsletter even though I can't contribute just now.

_____ I would like to help Interhelp thrive and expand its supportive services and scholarship aid to activists, and am enclosing a tax deductible contribution of: _____).

Please make checks payable to Interhelp, Inc. and mail responses to:

Interhelp PO Box 61 Delmar, NY 12054

INTERHELP WINTER GATHERING 2003

New Perspectives of Hope

Friday, Feb. 14 – Monday, Feb. 17, 2003

at Rowe Conference Center, Rowe, MA

to register, contact Rick Gottesman, (518)355-0744, rickgott@capital.net
or Sondra Sprinkling, (518)475-1929, risprin@attglobal.net

(A brochure with registration forms will be sent out at the end of the year)



The confusion of the title as printed here (*New Perspectives OF Hope*) and as printed earlier in the Rowe catalogue (*New Perspectives ON Hope*) provides a welcome teaching moment. The “on” version reminds us of the distinction between optimism (the unreasonable expectation of achieving a peaceful, sustainable world) and hope (the commitment to keep going without expectation because it is right and is the only way to perhaps achieve such a world despite all appearances). The “of” version invites us to examine what gives us hope, to focus on the sorts of hopeful trends covered, for example, in *HOPE Magazine* and in *YES! A Journal of Positive Futures*. Both versions will inform the Gathering.

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“Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”

— Vaclav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*