



centerings

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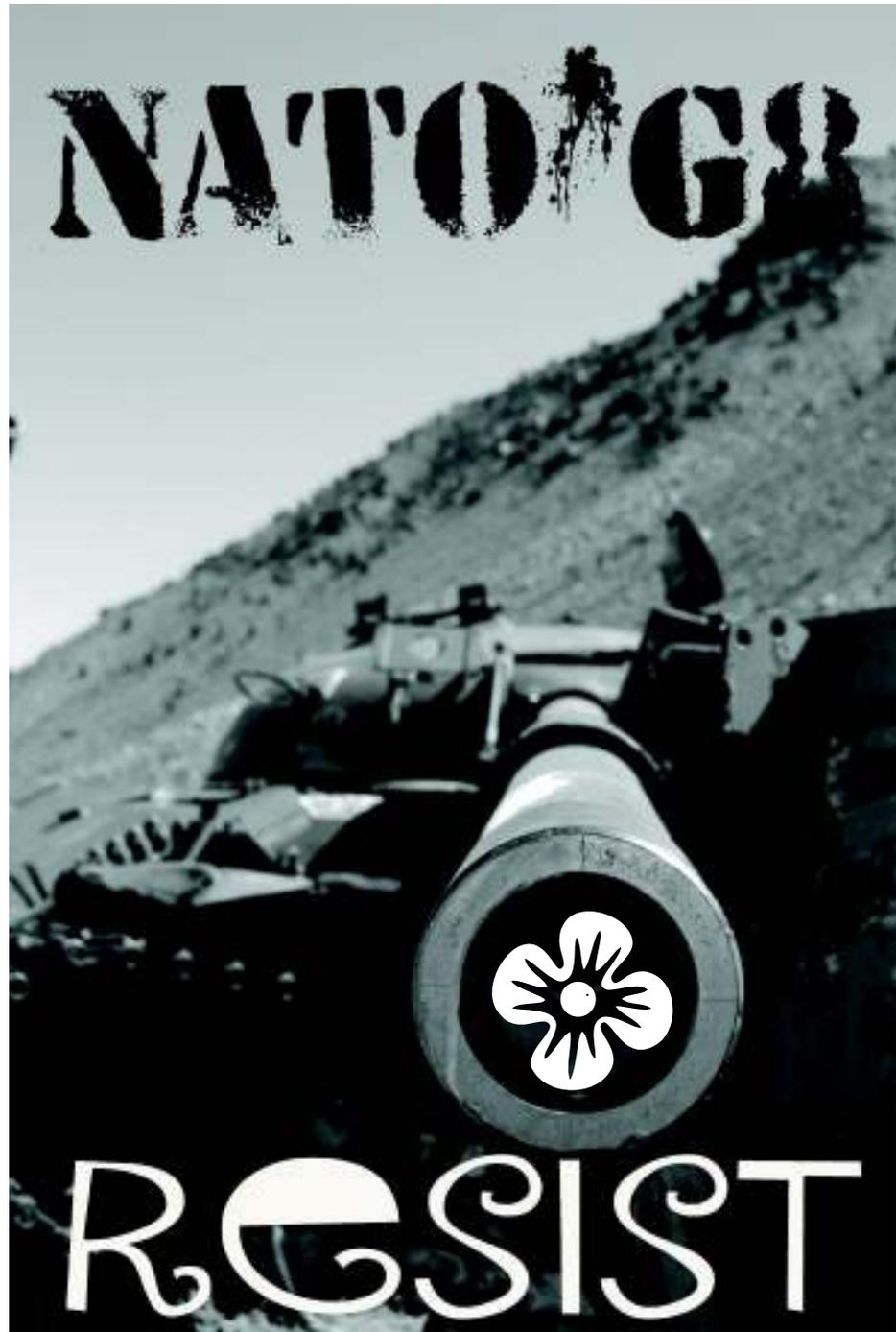
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On May 19th the most powerful decision making body, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, made up of 28 member countries from Europe and North America will convene in Chicago.

At the same time, global heads of state finance ministers and economic superpowers of the G8 will hold a summit at Camp David. Borrowing a term from the late Bob Dylan; the “Masters of War” (NATO), and the Global Economic Dream Team (G8), will not be convening to discuss the economic welfare of the majority, or the 99%, as our Occupy friends would say.

Nor will their agendas include the peace and prosperity of nations in which these global superpowers continue to occupy and engage in warfare. Rather, these simultaneous conventions, not mutually exclusive, will focus on how to maintain profitability and power with the ongoing use of military warfare to squash any form of rebellion in developing nations.

For this issue of *Centerings*, in light of these upcoming events, we have asked two authors to provide a brief “101” on NATO and G8 in hopes to educate our readers on both the history and impact of the players who sit at the decision-making table.

Buddy Bell unpacks the history and devastating impact of NATO, while providing an alternative agenda for nations who convene under NATO’s banner. Similarly, author **Andy Thayer** provides a synopsis of the historical negative influence and economic control of the G8, highlighting the relationship with NATO as the “de facto military arm” of the G8.

In addition, we have invited authors and coalition partners to write as “responders” to these global powers. These writers, from a variety of social movements, reflect their own personal commitment to their vision which stands in contrast with the “process” of NATO and G8. In so doing they provide alternative goals of change and self-determination that benefits the majority of the world population.

Jerica Arents contrasts NATO with a reflection of her experience with the Afghan Youth Peace Initiative, highlighting

the human cost of such concentrated power, and how the methods of the Afghan youth differ from that of NATO’s military mission.

Sonia Hassan shares her experience in the “Tahir Uprising” in Egypt and what this movement can teach us about the ability of social movements to impact massive social and political change without military use.

Matt Johnson reflects his own involvement with the Occupy movement and how the organization and decision-making methods of contrast with the G8 with transparency and a consensus decision making model that contrasts with G8.

Brooke Heagerty reflects her own motivations to fight for the 99% in society. In doing so she challenges the power of G8 by showing how a social movement can reveal the forgotten power of the people.

In our last section of this issue, **Barbara Marx Hubbard** provides a new cosmology perspective by describing how the process of evolution and its cycles are mirrored in human history, and what is evolving right now that might bring us hope in social movements.

Finally, **Rosemary Meyer, BVM** provides a faith perspective of our response to the world, and how this influences the struggles and dreams for those fighting for change and “living in hope!”

The hope lies within all of us, as we live in movements that envision the new world. Whether we join the masses in the streets in Chicago this May, or bravely stand up to war and violence in our own communities like the Afghan Youth Peace Initiative, we are living out the alternative we want to see.

As Rosemary Meyer states in her article, “our collaborative efforts are becoming more deeply rooted”. Therein lies our power; therein lies the change and justice we wish to see.

Erin Cox is a Staff Member of 8th Day Center for Justice, representing the Viatorian Community and Our Lady of Victory Noll Missionary Sisters.

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Why Do We Protest the NATO Summit?

By: Buddy Bell

Following World War II, a group of nations in the north Atlantic established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to impede Russian influence over the reconstruction of Europe and to facilitate their own.

This economic blueprint began under the Marshall Plan and continued when NATO saw European member countries shift their energy dependency from coal to oil at a time when the U.S. was the world's leading oil producer, supplying more than a third of worldwide production from within its own borders.

A couple of decades earlier, the U.S. wrested from Britain effective control over vast petroleum reserves in Venezuela. This arrangement ensured that U.S. oil companies stood to make a fortune, setting a high price to fulfill Western Europe's manufactured demand.

After the Cold War, the U.S. rebranded NATO and extended its mandate as a defender of liberty in regions beyond the north Atlantic. Although NATO sees military action as a suitable solution to various global conflicts, its effect creates discord and violence rather than alleviating global problems.

In Kosovo, NATO claimed that bombing the countryside would stop Yugoslav forces from invading homes and practicing summary executions of the Kosovars. Instead, Belgrade's atrocities at ground level "kicked into high gear," as was widely predicted by international aid workers, described in the Washington Post as "the only remaining brake on Yugoslav troops" and who were forced to leave their host villages when NATO commenced aerial bombing. Years later, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia would issue an indictment against Slobodan Milosevic on 17 Kosovo-related war crimes, 16 of which happened after NATO's entry into the conflict.

In Libya, the scene following the NATO-enabled civil war has been a chaotic mix of factional battles with various anti-Gaddafi militias who refuse to disband. On Jan 21, 2012, Libyan veterans were attacked with tear gas while protesting outside the Benghazi headquarters of the ruling NTC party, the site of a near-attack on the country's Vice President days earlier. They charged into the building and seized it while party officials fled.

Widespread torture of alleged Gaddafi loyalists has caused a vicious humanitarian catastrophe, prompting the medical aid group Doctors Without Borders to pull out of Misrata because "detainees were brought for care only to make them fit for further interrogation." NATO continues to insist that its actions have prevented political repression and have promoted freedom and democratic change, despite ample evidence to the contrary.

In Afghanistan, NATO has been the overseer, since 2003, of the criminal bombardment and invasion of a small nation, one which

has not initiated hostilities, by a vast superpower employing devastating and overwhelming weaponry. This war began to exceed the death toll of 9-11, civilian life for civilian life in only the first few months.

Over the last decade, the death toll has continued to mount. A report released in February by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) noted a sharp rise in the proportion of civilians killed that were women and children. The negligence of NATO was especially glaring from July to December of 2011, during which time aerial strikes killed triple the number of women and children who were killed over the corresponding period of the previous year.

Chillingly, NATO has looked at the Colombian government's devastating and prolonged war against the FARC as a model for staying the course in Afghanistan.

The scandals and crimes carried out by NATO troops and the detestable official apologies devoid of real solutions illustrate that each day the war continues will mean a continuing humanitarian disaster for Afghan people.

Those who participate in the May protest actions in Chicago will not only shed light on NATO's deranged historical trend, but propose an alternative agenda for nations who convene under NATO's banner.

The powerful nations of the world should be meeting to discuss ending drone strikes immediately, pulling combat forces out of Afghanistan, and ending their manipulation of Afghan democracy, which they do, in part, by propping up Hamid Karzai and the warlords in the National Assembly.

In addition, NATO should take responsibility for past criminality by providing reparations, to be dispersed by an independent body such as the UN General Assembly.

Reparations would fund projects decided on by local communities and might take the form of food aid, water filtration, housing construction, soil renewal, sanitation, mine disarmament medical brigades, etc. It is crucial that we walk, march, picket, and speak out to demand these real solutions.

Buddy Bell is a co-coordinator at *Voices for Creative Nonviolence*. With *Voices*, he is organizing a two-week march from Madison-Chicago leading up to the NATO. To learn more: <http://www.vcnv.org>

When we finally stepped off the helicopter and greeted the mountains of Bamiyan, Afghanistan, I was exhausted. A full day and a half after our departure, my eyelids were heavy and I was hoping, desperately, for a cup of warm, life-giving tea and a pile of blankets to collapse into. But the group of Afghans who invited us there – not an elite assembly of men with corporate interests or a bureaucratic non-profit, but a rag-tag group of teenagers who believe in the power of nonviolence – had a different idea in mind.

We were led, a boy on each arm, through the winding streets of Bamiyan City after dark. Like most Afghans, the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers live in a province that is extremely poor, with very few opportunities for paid work and little infrastructure. The city of sixty thousand has no indoor plumbing and only generators that provide a few hours of dirty generated electricity a night – so the youth had long ago memorized the geography of the dirt roads for night navigation.

We came upon a restaurant and filed in, and though the delegates knew no Dari and the teenagers only said a few words in English, we were able to communicate through smiles and laughter our deep gratitude for being in the presence of one another. And then my eyes fell on Ghulamai, the 12-year-old across from me whose broad smile seemed to reach all the way to his ears. He had been laughing with the others, but with a tone of seriousness, of gravity. He motioned to Hakim, our coordinator and translator, and spoke more loudly, I suspect, than he had meant to, and too hurriedly. The room went silent. Hakim paused.

“Ghulamai asked, ‘Do you think we are animals?’”

His question left me speechless. To a 12-year-old, and I'm sure to many Afghans much older than Ghulamai, this question comes from a place of sincerity. The United States, since invading in 2003, has only communicated to him through weaponry: the monstrous tanks that roll through his city, the white men covered in assault gear, the night raids, the bombings, the assassinations.

Our military's actions, and later the actions of NATO, have only communicated inconceivable levels of violence and oppression. I, too, would feel like an animal trapped in this deranged culture of dehumanization.

The 28 countries that comprise NATO spent \$1.1 trillion on defense and military expenditures in 2010. While NATO is touted as both a mechanism for humanitarian assistance and as

the only option for our globally secure future, its aggressive, expansionist policies have sponsored conflicts and suffering all over the world. Its first security operation outside its member countries was launched in 2003, when NATO took control of security in Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul.



Ghulamai in Bamiyan Province, Afghanistan

NATO is responsible for immeasurable amounts of economic and ecological exploitation and control. An institutional demagogue, NATO invades, occupies, and controls any country it sees fit to bow to the interests of its member countries.

Chicago will host the NATO Summit in May and, not surprisingly, Afghanistan's future is the top priority. Obama will be petitioning NATO to share more of the financial costs of the war, to draw down the U.S.' bloated budget in the military alliance, a concept known as “burden sharing”. The walls will reverberate with lectures made by heads of state on security, military strategy, and the economic drain of “transition”.

But what is the human cost of such concentrated power and wealth? We can ask my young Afghan friends, who live in a country of perpetual crisis – a country where one in four kids won't reach the age of five, where the average life expectancy is 42 years old. More than 60% of the population suffers from PTSD and other war-related mental illness.

“We can't talk of peace”, said Hakim, “outside of food security and economic justice.” An ordinary Afghan, if asked to speak to a forum of representatives of NATO, would have a simple message: we want enough food to feed our families and an opportunity to throw off the chains of this desperate, disparaging poverty. No more killing. No more war.

We would be hard-pressed to find a more beautiful vision of the future of Afghanistan than that of Ghulamai, whose hopes of peace have no place in the logic of NATO's heads of state. Which is the more human, really?

Jerica Arents traveled to Afghanistan as a delegate with *Voices for Creative Nonviolence*. She teaches peace studies at DePaul University and lives at the White Rose Catholic Worker in Chicago.

Photo By: Jerica Arents

Egyptian Revolution Contemplations

By: Sonia Hassan



I arrived in Egypt a month before the protests began. It was like many countries: overpopulated and polluted. People were angry and frustrated and were trying to find a way out.

I told my cousin that I felt like Egypt was going to explode and that the only solution to all the deep-rooted issues was to start a Revolution. He said this would never happen in Egypt because they

had seen what has happened in other countries that started an uprising.

Who would take care of the country? The fear of the unknown was worse to them than the nightmare they had been living their entire lives. It reminded me of an abusive parent-child relationship. Long-term dictators were all they'd ever experienced. They were brainwashed to believe that they needed them and that they had no power.

However, Egyptians have shown their power through not only Tahrir Square but all over Egypt. When enough people connect their intentions together, it shifts all living organisms. Even with military helicopters flying right above us, not knowing if we would be shot, it did not take away from the exhilaration of being with everyone there.

It didn't matter what religion you followed or what your occupation was; everyone just followed their hearts and did what they felt was right. It all came down to the basics of life, the concept of oneness. We had no worries of being hurt or killed because we were doing the only thing we had left to do. It was legitimate and worthy of whatever risks we were taking.

I was more frightened when I was in the streets of Cairo and in our apartment. The only news source we had was the brainwashing and fear-inducing segments of State TV. No one knew what to believe was really happening and who was responsible. There were gunshots on the streets and fear of being attacked and robbed every night. We were trapped in this feeling of being in the hands of an evil powerful force.

I believe this pushed everyone even more in their determination to stand up for themselves for the first time in their lives. There were no police anymore; it was each man for himself. Yet, the beauty was that it was really each man for each other. I started seeing the kindness, generosity, and pride in Egypt re-emerge.

I remember hearing Hillary Clinton say that everything is stable

in Egypt and that the Egyptians need to stay calm; that Mubarak was a longtime friend of the U.S. How they could say these things when Egypt was in the midst of being attacked by the military with tear gas, rubber bullets, tanks, and snipers?

However, when the U.S. realized that the people were not going to back down, they changed their tune, saying they supported the Egyptian people to have their own "democracy". This pushed the Egyptians to not want any involvement by outside forces.

After all that the Egyptian people have suffered and died for, it is disturbing that the U.S. has recently approved military aid again to Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). The weapons that killed and disabled the protestors were made in the U.S.

This confirms that even after the U.S. claimed that they were proud of and supported the Egyptians in their Revolution, there were still some behind-the-scenes deals happening with SCAF and the old regime. The U.S. government's actions show that they really do not care about the well-being of people or what they call "democracy".

Egypt has demonstrated that it is more than capable of having its own voice and doesn't need any interference from NATO or any other country in determining their choices or fate.

In fact if these other countries would just stay out of Egypt's internal dealings, Egypt could already be on its way to becoming a true democracy. But we know that international politics are entangled with one another, especially when there has been a dependency fostered on each other for so long.

Egypt is a major player in what happens between the Middle East and the U.S., and, in turn, the World.

Sonia Hassan was born and raised in the U.S. of Egyptian descent. A multi-faceted woman, she is studying Fashion, Massage Therapy and Spiritual Healing and is working as a Commercial Model, Actor and TV/Radio Voice-Over Artist. She volunteers for Amnesty International and creates a conscious music event in Chicago called AFRICA HI-FI.

Photo by: Daniel Peter

With this May's G8 summit now moved to Camp David, many justice-seeking Chicagoans might be tempted to allow opposition to the G8 to slip from their radar screens. The fact that the G8 is far less understood than NATO in this country makes that slippage even more tempting.

But just because the G8 won't be in Chicago doesn't mean that we don't have an obligation to do our best to understand what it is, what it does, and whether we should oppose it.

The G8, like NATO, is a product of the Cold War, and has continued to expand since then, even though the original rationale of opposing Russian-dominated economies is gone.

Since the United States is far less dominant economically than it is militarily, it is less able to wield unquestioning dominance in the G8 than it does NATO, and is increasingly being challenged in other historically U.S.-dominated institutions like the IMF and World Bank. U.S. military spending accounts for half of the world's total, but economically, it accounts for only 23% of world GDP.

Because of the more equal footing among its members, G8 meetings are more typically talk-shops of the 1%, rather than linear policy setting sessions. But for all their rivalries and divisions, the G8 are united on two related objectives: assuring the dominance of the 1st world over the 3rd, and domestically, the 1% over the 99%.

As the projected agenda for the forthcoming G8 summit shows, there is no clear line of demarcation between the economic concerns of the G8 versus the "separate" military concerns of NATO. A University of Toronto-based think tank recently announced that "it is also expected that the G8 summit will agree on new ways for NATO nations to prioritize, specialize and share multinational projects so that they can keep and improve their security capabilities, an approach known as 'Smart Defense.'"

Indeed, given that the G8 countries frequently fight among themselves over protectionism, trade access and the like, military "defense" is one of the few things that they can agree on and actually set policy as a group.

So again at this May's G8 "the U.S. has assumed the lead for the three nonproliferation groups that report to the G8: the Nonproliferation Directors Group (NPDG); the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, and the Nuclear Safety and Security Group (NSSG). The first meeting of the NPDG was held by Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation."

And just who is this Assistant Secretary? None other than Thomas Countryman, who is described on a State Department website as "a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, rank of Minister-



Counselor, [who] has been Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs since June 2009. ...The Bureau is the principal link between the State and Defense Departments. It manages military assistance programs; provides diplomatic support to DoD global operations; conducts strategic dialogues with Allies and partners; and regulates defense exports and arms transfers..."

In other words, the G8 is far from being an "economics-only" institution. As the United States continues to decline in economic strength relative to the rest of the world, it has increasingly leaned on its overwhelming military superiority to impose its will on economic subordinates, such as Iran, and economic rivals, such as China.

The G8 has itself become much more militarized over the past few years as the U.S. is increasingly unable to get what it wants through purely economic bullying – it has become "smart-defensed".

Today, NATO is the de facto military arm of the G8. The economic sanctions of the G8 countries, as we've seen with Iraq and Libya, are often the prelude to the military attacks of NATO and/or its main component nations. Iran, particularly after the November election, regardless of who wins, could be next.

The increased militarization of U.S. foreign and domestic policy, regardless of which party is in power, is no accident, mistake, nor a simple "policy alternative". It is the byproduct of increased competition between economic rivals in a context of overall economic decline. Our rulers attack each other and their own populations to make up the gap in what they're accustomed to receiving, at a time when the 99% have even less to give.

Andy Thayer is co-founder of the Gay Liberation Network (www.GayLiberation.net), and is one of the main organizers of *Coalition Against NATO/G8 War and Poverty Agenda (CANG8)*. For more info see: http://chicagospring.org/#!/Nato_G8

The Intrinsic Power of the 99%: An Alternative to the G8 By: Matt Johnson

This past September, a curious thing happened. As far as anyone could tell, nothing had really changed. The super-wealthy were super-powerful. War was raging on with no end in sight. The left were as fractured and the youth as apathetic as ever. Yet, a small group of committed people deemed to change the world because that's the only thing that ever has. The world hadn't changed yet, but nobody told them.

I was at work, about a week prior, browsing a leftist bulletin board when I came across an interesting posting titled, "Occupy Wall Street: Test Run". I didn't quite understand what they were up to. From what I could gather, some folks were going to see if they could push the lines and set up a protest camp site near Wall Street.

On their first night testing police reaction, nine were arrested. Who could have dreamed that a week later, this ragtag group would light a spark that has done something every activist I have ever met yearns for? They started a social movement. They started this movement and have sustained it by doing something so incredibly simple, yet dramatically radical – they refused to leave.

The dominant economic and political structure the world is victim to continues to operate because most people won't even show up, let alone hold their ground once they've gotten there. Occupy Wall Street demonstrates an understanding of the world that we have come to know, almost as a matter of instinct – the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. It is no mistake that the rallying cry has become, "We are the 99%!" The simple act of putting a body into a public space and speaking indefinitely has lit something up within the everyday person.

We know something is wrong when our friends are losing their pensions and homes, but the person who got rich slicing and dicing the bad loans into intentionally cryptic financial commodities, walks free, and the business that failed because of him, got bailed out by our same evicted and now pension-less friends. We knew it was wrong even before that, but we wanted to believe in the fantasy that we live in a fair system and that the wealthy and powerful got to be that way through hard work, not through force and manipulation.

It is fitting that the Group of Eight (G8) should be meeting in the spring following the birth of the Occupy Movement. There is no group that more clearly encompasses the imagery of the 99%

vs. the 1%. The G8 is a group of eight people, in a world of six billion, who meet annually to decide the direction that they would like the world to live by. They have closed-door, secret meetings, exemplifying how the wealthiest people would like the world to work: when we talk, you shut up.



It is, then, not surprising that, this year, when faced with the prospect of having thousands of newly class-conscious, righteously angered, ninety-nine percenters ready and willing to crash the meeting in Chicago, the leader of the gang decided to pack up the show and move it to one of the least public places in the country – Camp David.

Similarly, the Occupy Movement has also been meeting with the goal of directing the world in the way they want to see it. However, in sharp contrast to the G8, the Occupy encampments, which have sprung up all over the world, have been gathering in public spaces. They meet regularly and openly, with transparency and extensive documentation. They operate under consensus models, wherein the goal of the discussion is not to have a debate, but to reach an agreement. Where the G8 is set up to bully the world into living according to the direct interests of a miniscule group of people, the Occupy movement aims to bring everyone to the table, even the wretched 1%.

The G8, of course, has much more power than the Occupy movement. I believe, however, that is just a temporary hurdle. A union organizer said to me once that the key moment in the fight against the owners of a workplace is when the workers realize their bosses have no intrinsic power. The strength and beauty of the Occupy movement is that every day it helps someone realize that the shot-callers, whether the G8 or the 1% at large, have no power as long as we struggle together.

Matt Johnson is a Membership Coordinator for Unite Here Local 1, Chicagoland's Union for local hospitality workers. For more information about Unite Here see <http://www.unitehere1.org>. Photo By: Democratic Daily



History shows us that every ruling class uses its power and wealth, its privilege, to hold back change, no matter how inevitable or how much it is demanded. As their world crumbles beneath their feet the ruling class grow ever more brutal, more determined. They dredge up the hatreds of history; they pit one against another; they foment pogroms and genocides and unspeakable crimes. They try to crush every voice that dares to oppose their power.

I have dedicated my adult life to fighting for a world where every person shares in not only the material wherewithal of society, but everything that sharing has to offer – a life of contribution and meaning, a life of purpose, a life fully realized. The stark inability of all but a tiny handful of wealthy to achieve such a life – if they do indeed – has propelled me throughout my life to speak out, to protest, to teach, and to write, to try to understand the myriad ways we are prevented from the life that was intended for us.

I have sought to understand the reasons behind the cultivation of the hatred of others due to their color, their poverty, their sex or their faith. I have sought to understand the cultivation of the hatred of others who, like me, have fought for the cooperative, communist society that has long been the vision of generations. I have sought an understanding of the world as it is not for its own sake, but to join with others in order to change it.

The powers we face are mighty, to be sure. Such forums as the G8 do the bidding of a global ruling class and make no attempt to disguise its indifference to the fate of the peoples of the world. Once the decisions have been made, NATO stands ready to enforce the demands of this ruling class with a

brutality so monstrously calculated that it defies all known moral teachings.

But I have come to understand that their power is only ephemeral. If history shows us nothing else, it shows us that the mightiest empire can be pulled down once change gets underway, once people begin to recognize themselves and what they want, once they make up their minds to fight for a different world. And in the upswell of transformation, all the old ideas and institutions that held them in place are swept away along with the old order as people set about organizing themselves in a different way.

History is full of the overturning of old orders and the creation of new ones, and we are again on the cusp of yet another great transformation. Something new is developing in the world. For the first time in human history qualitatively new technologies make it possible to free human beings from endless, mind-deadening toil, opening up the possibility that the work of life can now be creation and contribution.

Under the capitalist system, however, these new technologies replace labor in order to make greater profit for the capitalist class. Yet, as millions are thrown out of work who will buy all the goods and services these technologies produce? How will these millions live?

The answer is we can't. Spreading uprisings here at home and around the world are testimony to this clash. The disruption and destruction of the old economic and social order and the struggle to create a new one is based on the possibilities that history is once again handing us.

Ultimately, it is people who make history. Their understanding of who they are, what they want, and what they will struggle and sacrifice for. Whether I am writing an article, making a talk, or protesting in the streets, I do so with a vision in my head of not what I am fighting against, but what I am fighting for – a peaceful, cooperative world where no one goes without and everyone shares in the fruits of all that human society has to offer.

Brooke V. Heagerty, *Ph.D.* is the Editor of *Rally*, Comrades! the voice of the *League of Revolutionaries for a New America*. She is the co-author of *Moving Onward: From Racial Division to Class Unity* and has written and spoken on such topics as race, women's rights and globalization for over twenty years. She can be reached at brooke@gocatgo.com.

Photo by: Steven De Polo, Interaction Institute

Living in the 21st century is both thrilling and challenging. Human beings have created technological and social advances which allow cell phones, Facebook and Twitter to play major roles in organizing against dictators. Change.org is a social action website advocating for change locally and globally. Millions of people sign petitions on Change.org every month.

Social networking has the opportunity and the power to co-create interconnected and interdependent futures for all species. Corporations opposing the use of small gestational stalls for pregnant sows realize the connection between healthy animals and healthy humans. The emergence of conscious connectivity forms circles of relationship and erases the boundaries of hierarchy.

The Universe story awakens in us the memory of our ancestors—stones, plants, animals, humans, the communion of saints and the Divine presence among us. Cosmic spirituality develops a cosmological consciousness. Humans understand the power of trees at the local level through the cosmological level, thanks to the witness of Wangari Maathai in Kenya. Her hope and her ability to educate, organize and energize women to act together on behalf of the environment which is connected to their own well-being and also against unjust social and political systems are a model of dedication to justice in collaboration with others.

Stardust-shaped humans are experiencing the creativity of ecological movements worldwide which range from recycling to reusing, from opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline to inclusion of the Rights for Nature in the Ecuadoran constitution. The diversity and beauty of our Creator's bounty lead us to become involved in protecting the rights of immigrants, in challenging the realities of poverty and the pollution of water, in resisting unjust laws and infringements on rights guaranteed in the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The interconnectedness and interdependence we celebrate in creation leads us to join together in a variety of coalitions—local, regional, national, international and cosmic. Some of these coalitions are familiar to us—8th Day Center for Justice, Foundation for Conscious Evolution, School of the Americas Watch, Project IRENE. A recent example is the Occupy movement with 2500 plus presences in the United States and in over 80 countries. Linguists chose “occupy” as the word of the year for 2011. Working together collaboratively opens space for emerging just and creative solutions, facilitates positive, innovative social change and enlivens hope.

Through active participation in groups such as these, community,

synergy and positive energy abound. Connections with others and with our Creator draw us into a hope-filled stance and a deepening spirituality of oneness. Mexican sculptor Yvonne Domenge and her “Interconnected” creations and Polish sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz, creator of “agora,” an integration of humanness and treeness, draw us through art into a sense of cultural connection and profound relatedness. Collaboration and co-creation impact the evolution of our consciousness and draw us into a new way of being in which hope provides the stamina to continue our justice efforts.

As we humans become more conscious of the power and strength of hope, we envision new academic, cosmic, cultural, political, social, spiritual and technological potentialities. Our spirituality leads us to feast on positive emergences rather than allowing fear to lessen our energy and negatively impact newness and co-creativity.

Our challenge in the 21st century is to confront our fears and to be empowered by hope in order to co-create with others compassionate, synergetic social and political systems.

Instead of using technology to genetically modify food, more folks will use technology to produce healthy, locally grown produce. Instead of funding wars, we continue to design and fund relevant, creative educational opportunities for all. Instead of glorifying women as sex objects, we pass more legislation to stop trafficking. Instead of poverty level wages, we demand that all employers provide a living wage with benefits. Instead of negative thinking, we overcome fear with hope.

Hope nurtures optimism for the present and the future. Social and political systems are evolving that honor our global interconnection and interdependence and reflect the creativity and diversity of our Creator.

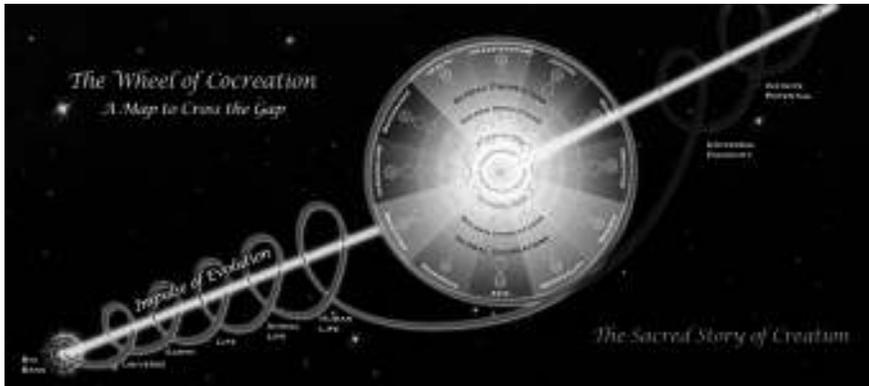
During each day in this 21st century, our collaborative efforts are becoming more deeply rooted. They are being carried forward in both linear and cyclic time to co-create a renewed Earth inhabited by just social and political systems, life-giving technology, engaged spirituality and a rejoicing cosmos. Let us continue to hope and act for justice together!

Rose Mary Meyer, BVM is director of Project IRENE (Illinois Religious Engaged in Nonviolent Endeavors), an initiative of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in Illinois.

Photo By Wolfhirschhorn.org



Evolution as Revelation of the Impulse of Creation By: Barbara Marx Hubbard



We are in an emerging life condition. No one has been through the global crises faced by humanity as a high technology, polluting, and self-conscious species over-growing its womb of Earth. There are no elders on the other side of this crisis to guide us through. Humanity has no historical experience with evolutionary crises of this scale and degree.

The context of life, creation and history is so much larger than we have known...At the Core of this Spiral of Evolution we discover the Impulse of Evolution, the Consciousness Force, the Intention of the Divine. It is awakening in our hearts as the Impulse of Evolution incarnating, embodying as our own motivation to evolve and co-create.

Once we see this unfolding pattern we discover that there is a direction in evolution toward higher consciousness, greater freedom through more complex order, as Teilhard de Chardin described in the Law of Complexity/Consciousness.

We see that there are recurring patterns in nature that move us toward this higher order. These patterns reveal a multi-billion year trend. The new part is that we are aware of these fractals and can apply them consciously in our own actions and choice. Here are two of the main Lessons of Evolution we can apply:

1. Problems are evolutionary drivers; Crises precede transformation.

We begin to reinterpret our problems and crises as vital to our own evolution. When we look at the set of crises; Global Warming, resource depletion, species extinction, injustice, poverty, violence, separation, we see that each of these problems is now calling forth innovations, new projects, countless people working not only toward solving but evolving beyond them, as with new energy systems, caring for nature and other species as an Earth community, cultivating global empathy for hunger, poverty, disaster, realizing that war itself is immoral and obsolete.

Meanwhile we find that our global nervous system is connecting us in one rapidly forming brain/mind/heart. This expanded network is beginning to rally people to concerted action far outside of any

existing structure. Through this new social media we can overcome dictators, activate movements like "Occupy" which can spread within a few weeks.

We are the first species to realize that all life is interdependent and that we could render ourselves and all life forms extinct by our own actions. This realization is the greatest wake-up call we have ever had. It means our crisis is potentially a birth toward a co-creative, co-evolving humanity.

The crises are actually forcing us into the first Age of Conscious Evolution. This means evolution by choice not chance.

2. Nature takes jumps through greater synergy: the coming together of separate parts to form whole systems greater than and unpredictable from the sum of its parts.

Nature has jumped for billions of years up the chain of being from subatomic particles toward the formation of truly unbelievably complex whole systems like our bodies with the trillions of cells operating as a whole.

This means we have to develop synergistic cooperative social structures to evolve beyond the top down pyramidal systems that built civilization for the past 5000 years. They are not capable of helping us evolve the system because they are structured for separation and competition. We see it in politics, in religion, in business, in separate disciplines in our great universities.

In my current experience, the Congregation of St. Joseph, with whom I have the privilege of working, are co-creating the most synergistic, evolutionary leadership model I have encountered.

American women religious are one of evolution's most potent forces! Now is the time for the next level of evolutionary leadership to come forth consciously from this amazing group of prophetic, pioneering women.

Many years ago I asked the universe a question: What in our age is comparable to the story of the birth of Jesus? The response I received was "Our story is the birth of a universal co-creative humanity. What Jesus and all the great spiritual avatars revealed about moving toward a higher order of unity in love is true. We are all members of this one planetary body. We are one, we are whole, we are good, and we are being born to the next stage of our evolution. OUR CRISIS IS A BIRTH.

Barbara Marx Hubbard is a prolific author, visionary, co-founder and chairperson of the Foundation for Conscious Evolution. For more information – <http://www.barbaramarxhubbard.com>

Meet 8th Day's Young Adult Associates



8th Day is fortunate to have a community of young adults who partner with and support the Center. We asked some of our Associates to share with us why they choose to partner with 8th Day. Here's what they had to say...



"During my time at Su Casa Catholic Worker, where much of work focused on addressing the immediate needs of families living there, I was comforted by 8th Day's commitment to address the systemic reasons for the suffering I encountered. I am continually inspired by 8th Day: the courage of its staff, its functioning in a nonhierarchical manner consistent with its values, its prophetic stance and attentiveness to the Spirit, for holding the tension of faithfulness amidst a Church that is itself laden with injustice. The work of systemic change can be agonizingly slow and rarely rewarding. I count myself lucky to stand with 8th Day in its strident faithfulness to this call."

– Chantal deAlcuaz, Chicago, IL

On April 30th, 8th Day hosted **Brews and Bites for 8th Day** an event at Revolution Brewing in Chicago, IL. It was a great opportunity for young adults to network, socialize and learn about 8th Day's justice work. The event also featured the launching of **8th Day's Young Adult Council**. Stay tuned for future events!

"When faced with such an unfortunate abundance of injustices, it can be either deflating or galvanizing. Supporting an organization like 8th Day allows us to make a difference. We feel consoled to know that we are helping to provide education and support to some of the most pressing issues of our time."



"It only takes a casual glance at the newspaper to realize that there is much in this world that deserves improving. When faced with such an unfortunate abundance of injustices, it can be either deflating or galvanizing. Supporting an organization like 8th Day allows us to make a difference. We feel consoled to know that we are helping to provide education and support to some of the most pressing issues of our time. We personally might not be able to participate in all the actions, but it's liberating to know people who are and to give support to their work."

– Megan and Jordan Skarr, Chicago, IL



"I deeply appreciated 8th Day's mission of mutuality and solidarity, and so, my understanding of those values was heightened from the good connections that I made with everyone. I didn't want to lose those relationships and all that I had gained from my volunteer year. The dedicated staff continually inspires me to further dedicate myself to a good cause. I went from doing many things as a volunteer to now focusing on one thing [annual event] more deeply. My ongoing relationship with 8th Day has also given me good perspective. My experience with social analysis at 8th Day complemented my existing foundation of reflection but brought about a new depth that I have now applied throughout graduate school and other internships. It has been a pleasure to be able to give back to 8th Day after all of the opportunities that they've exposed me to, especially the SOA vigil, the USSF and Witness for Peace's delegation to Colombia." – Ashley Velchek, former Claretian Volunteer at 8th Day, Chicago, IL

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