



From The Wilderness

A Nonpartisan Non-sectarian MAP for the Here That Is, Into the Tomorrow of Our Own Making

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THE BELOVED CYNTHIA MCKINNEY

A White Ex Cop Speaks Out About a Georgia Congresswoman

by
Michael C. Ruppert

April 11, 2006 1000 PST (FTW) - ASHLAND—Cynthia McKinney is a friend of mine. Until the day I die she will be a friend of mine. More than that, she will be a role model and an inspiration that I don't ever expect to be equaled, let alone surpassed. Full disclosure.

Out of several dozen Op-Eds, news reports and commentaries on the now-infamous so-called "cop-slapping" event of March 29th, I haven't seen a single one that, from my perspective, got it right. So right up front, let me say that if I am forced to look at this one snapshot incident, divorced from context and history, then yes, my very good friend messed up. It shouldn't have become as big a deal as it has and she bears some responsibility for that. But if I look at the event as part of a continuum of the life of congress, or the life of this nation, and (no less importantly) of the life of this woman, things look and feel a whole lot different.

The virulent, spit-dripping, white, racist commentators from Boertz to DeLay and the oh-so-PC and dainty black Democratic pundits, columnists and pols who pick Cynthia McKinney apart—pretending to defend her while putting her black butt on the E-Bay auction block for November—are actually allies. They both want her to go away. They both want the issues that have come too close to public recognition in this case to go away. Leaders from left and right, black or white, cannot bear the thought of actually looking deeper at what happened with Cynthia McKinney and what it means.

Let me give you an historical hint. As a rule, wars are generally started over big events, (e.g. the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, Pearl Harbor, North Korea's Army Crossing the 38th parallel). Revolutions are generally started over less memorable things (e.g. "Let them eat cake," a tea tax, some government troops opening fire on unarmed demonstrators). People of all colors and political persuasions understand that underlying both wars and revolutions are monstrous icebergs of unresolved inequity. So it is with Cynthia McKinney. And it is her hairdo (new or old, take your pick) that now sits atop an iceberg that both right-wing whites and bought-off blacks would like to go away.

I have walked the halls of Congress with Cynthia McKinney maybe eight to ten times. I have walked into and out of the Cannon and Longworth house office buildings with her. I have walked to hearings in the Rayburn house office building with her. I have walked the underground tunnels from one of those office buildings directly to the edge of the House floor and its anteroom with her. I can tell you one thing for certain because I have seen it and I have felt it. Cynthia McKinney and her staff get treated differently from just about anyone else on the Hill. It's subtle, but so is the taste of dirt when it's in your mouth.

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From the Wilderness

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TELLING TRANSFORMATIVE TALES

The Strange Post-Ranger Saga of Pat Tillman

by Stan Goff

FTW Military Affairs Editor

April 5, 2006 1400 PST (FTW) - Gary Jones was my battalion commander when I was at 3rd Special Forces in 1994. Prior to the invasion of Haiti in September that year, he liked me. His Bravo Company free-fall parachute team, Operational Detachment-Alpha 354, was suffering from a host of problems associated with a mentality that might be described as primadonna crossed with frat house. I was a newly minted Master Sergeant, with strong special ops credentials, and time spent as a platoon sergeant in a Ranger Battalion, which suggested I had an above-average grasp of both infantry doctrine and troop leading procedures. Jones appointed me the "Top" sergeant of this detachment with instructions to "straighten that shit out over there."

Jones had a kind of heterodox country-boy personality. He once told me he thought game wardens were un-American. Of course, these officer personalities are as carefully constructed as a film character, and require whole subordinate chains of command to suspend disbelief...or to feign suspension of disbelief long enough to get a maxed Officer Evaluation Report. His character was designed to lower expectations enough to highlight his technical competence; and he liked to display a touch of buccaneer spirit—which is anything but non-conformist in Special Forces. It's a character mask.

We have become a society of character masks. That's why we no longer know who we actually are.

When Jones buckled under in Haiti on the first day to the intellectual pipsqueak placed in charge of the invasion, and pleaded with us not to get him into any trouble, I was personally hurt—having developed a kind of affection for him. I wrote extensively about this in *Hideous Dream*, my first book, and about the other battalion commander I was attached to for the bulk of the invasion, Lieutenant Colonel David Schroer.

Schroer and I were at odds throughout the whole operation over a host of issues, and we shared a mutual and deep distrust and dislike of each other.

Life is nothing if not ironic, and David Schroer eventually changed his name to Diane Schroer after he retired, and had sexual reassignment surgery. She is now suing the Library of Congress for rescinding a job offer once her transgender status was understood. The irony is that I would today aggressively defend Diane Schroer, and now more clearly understand and empathize with the former David Schroer. While I was on the rack over the question of the character of the invasion in which I was participating, Schroer was on another terrible psychological rack of his own.

(cont'd on page 5)

ICEBERGS

Between 1974 and 1977, as I prowled the streets of “The Jungle” in South Central L.A. (in uniform and later as a detective and undercover narc) I knew little about being human. The Jungle is the place where “Boyz in the Hood” and Denzel Washington’s “Training Day” were filmed. I was a good cop, a very good cop. I didn’t have any sustained personnel complaints. My rating reports were always “outstanding.” The law-abiding citizens by and large trusted me when they saw me. My liberal education at UCLA had at least partially sensitized me to a world that seemed impossible to understand—a world that scared me just as much as it enticed me with its opportunities for heroism, peer recognition, and self-acceptance. My father had been a war hero and I wanted to know if I was cut from the same cloth.

I was known for being aggressive; eager to embrace danger; a budding, brilliant investigator; and an unmatched report writer. I was a “hard-charger” as they called it in those days. Perhaps the best role model I had as a cop was a black LAPD Captain by the name of Jesse A. Brewer who also taught me about leadership, friendship and loyalty.

I didn’t need to beat up innocent people because the streets where I worked were full of *guilty* people: robbers, burglars, heroin dealers, wife beaters, rapists, and car thieves. I was on the streets (and not far away) the night the Symbionese Liberation Army were roasted like marshmallows after making the mistake of trying to shoot it out with my brothers in blue. We were all men in those days, no women. I was on the streets for months before and after the time when every LA cop had a fear of making a routine traffic stop and facing an automatic weapon, a rocket launcher, a bomb, or a Molotov cocktail. Tense times.

For several years I averaged between 20 and 30 felony arrests per month—good arrests. Who had time to go after innocent people just because they were black? Also in those days, I also used the word “nigger” about 15 times a day. It was the culture. It was my ignorance. In the 1970s, LAPD reports used the official word Negro to describe African-Americans and before I joined LAPD in 1973 I had seen or talked to only around 20 black people in my whole life: maids, taxi drivers, bellmen—you know “colored people.” I talked like those around me talked. I thought it was cool.

As front-page stories in the *Herald Examiner* described me in 1981, I was “... a white kid from Orange County in a blue uniform sent to a black ghetto.”

The one thing I could not understand for about fifteen years after that was the maybe half-dozen different black men who had approached me in futility and rage, tearing open their shirts and looking at me with absolute sincerity as they said, “Shoot me. Go ahead, shoot me. I got nothing to lose.” They meant it, and it mattered not at all what the last incident was that had taken place before they snapped with that sublime mix of rage and complete despair. A lifetime of inequalities, social and economic; injustices, past and present; and frustrations, ever present; had pushed those men beyond their breaking point. It took me a while to get to that point, but I got there too, and now I understood something about being black.

Through two decades of 12-Step work, intense spiritual effort and personal therapy I have seen my errors, felt genuine remorse,

and made my amends. One of those amends came in 1996 when—in a face-to-face confrontation with a CIA director—I challenged the same government I had once protected for smuggling hundreds of tons of cocaine into the United States, where much of it was intentionally routed to the inner cities.

Since then, and on more than one occasion, Black America, and black individuals in America have saved my life. No one rushed to take a bullet for me. No, what was done for me was to give me acceptance, support, friendship, a meal and some soul. You can do a lot with a little bit of soul.

Among all of the African Americans I know—and there are many—Cynthia McKinney stands head and shoulders above the rest. Screw her hairdo; It’s the woman’s mind and heart that need to be considered here.

Flash forward a couple of decades from the late 1970s.

It’s now 2000 and my little newsletter *From The Wilderness* is steadily growing as we look at issues like US Government covert operations in [Colombia](#), death squads, the global drug trade, the prison-industrial complex, drug money flowing into [Al Gore’s](#) presidential campaign, [PROMIS](#) software and a then little-known company named [Halliburton](#). My friend Al Giordano of the [Narco News Bulletin](#) brought Cynthia McKinney to my attention. I emailed her and she responded almost immediately.

There was an immediate friendship. Cynthia McKinney was the first member of congress I had met (about 15 at the time) who actually seemed to be a human being who actually gave a hoot and who actually comprehended all the government criminality people were talking about. She responded to emails. She took phone calls. She actually cut checks from the Treasury to subscribe to *FTW*. She bought our videos and reports and...she read them. She handed them out.

She asked questions and didn’t pretend to know everything. She read. She listened. She understood.

And then came 9/11.

There are millions of Americans who still have major unanswered questions about the attacks of September 11th. Some are wives, husbands, and children of the victims. Some, like me, are investigative journalists. Many are just average people who could never swallow the galactic inconsistencies of the government account and who have refused to succumb to pressure for conformity. Cynthia McKinney was the one to ask “What did the Bush administration know and when did it know it?” about the scores of detailed warnings received by the administration in the months before the attacks. Contrary to one account from a black commentator recently, she has *never* retracted that question.

For that question, she was tarred and feathered in the press. From her long-standing support of Palestinian rights and objections to Israeli strong-arm tactics in the occupied territories emerged a new double-edged motive to remove her from congress at all costs. Cynthia McKinney was an un-American, anti-Semitic supporter of terrorists!

An Oreo black candidate named Denise Majette emerged as lots of money poured from the coffers of the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) funded not only a hate campaign against McKinney, but in support of her opponent as well.

Illegally, thousands of Republican voters crossed over to vote for the Oreo in the primary while the seat stayed safely Democratic, and all were quietly relieved when Cynthia didn't even make it to the general election.

Cynthia McKinney will tell you that I and the entire 9/11 movement stayed with her loyally throughout her two-year imposed vacation. And I believe she will tell you that it was in part because we organized fundraisers for her and kept her name out there that she made it back—to everyone's surprise except ours—in 2004.

Cynthia McKinney had been the only member of congress to ask real questions about 9/11. And she didn't stop or forget when she got back either. More than that, she continued to do—no matter what—the things that her conscience bade her to do as an African-American woman who is anything but a racist (unless you want to refer to the human race). In hearings she questioned Donald Rumsfeld about the multitude of wargame exercises I had identified in my book [Crossing the Rubicon](#). She asked repeated questions about 9/11 in repeated hearings and no one on the Democratic side backed her up when her questions were brushed aside, ignored and forgotten. She also kept up her support for the rights of the oppressed everywhere and she didn't change one single note of her sheet music or its cadence.

She held the only hearing on Capitol Hill where investigators, authors, and families questioning the official version of 9/11 had a voice. She invited me, [Wayne Madsen](#) and [Ray McGovern](#) to act as questioners at that hearing, and she was the only member of congress to sit through that hearing.

She was there for the victims of Katrina and Rita who fled as refugees to Atlanta last fall. She was there to protect black culture and black history through her Tupac bill. She was there for her constituents and for all of the disenfranchised, battered, demoralized, and desperate Americans of all colors who had come to see her as “the politician of last resort.”

PLATE TECTONICS

Almost every armchair pundit (left or right) who has criticized Cynthia McKinney has told only part of her story.

When she was returned to congress, her party, overlooking well-documented procedure with a number of historical precedents, refused to give her back the seniority to which she was entitled. In terms of committee assignments, instead of being a six-term senior member of her committees, she was a freshman. This placed her last on the list of questioners, last in terms of pecking order, last in terms of recognition, and last in terms of agenda setting. She was denied her old spot on the House Foreign Relations committee. She was moved further and further away from the coveted and influential title of “ranking member” that she should have been approaching. Should the House revert back to Democratic control this year she might have even chaired a committee. God forbid!

They did throw the Negro woman McKinney a bone in the form of a nicer office than before (the only place where her true seniority was recognized). “Here bitch, drive this Cadillac and shut up!”

While House Democratic leadership under Nancy Pelosi of California has been brutal to Cynthia McKinney, the treatment afforded her by the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) has been equally despicable. Not only did the CBC not fight for McKinney's

legitimate seniority, it also seems that they have taken pleasure in snubbing her. Solidarity my ass.

One anecdote paints the picture pretty clearly.

Last fall, after I had acted as a questioner for two panels sponsored by McKinney at the CBC's annual convention, I was surprised as she handed me a ticket to the CBC formal banquet. This is a big annual event and I sat just a few tables away from John Kerry. Howard Dean was a few tables past Kerry. More than a thousand people, dressed to the nines, filled a crowded ballroom.

Cynthia was a no-show and it didn't take long to figure out why. As every black member of Congress was introduced by seniority, starting with the Honorable John Conyers of Michigan, Cynthia McKinney's name was saved for last. Even the Congressional Black Caucus could not recognize a sister's seniority and service, not even when it wouldn't have cost them a thing.

Where was Cynthia during that dinner? She wasn't there. She was off violating a direct order from Nancy Pelosi not to attend a massive anti-war rally on the Mall. She was standing with Cindy Sheehan. She was giving a speech denouncing the war in Iraq and the Bush administration. She was doing her job. I sat at McKinney's table next to my ad hoc dinner partner Kathleen Cleaver, weeping over the insult on McKinney. Not once since have I seen Cynthia McKinney even flinch over it.

I have watched Cynthia McKinney quietly and gracefully endure monstrous insults, sleights and provocations that I could never keep silent over. I have watched the world wait for a misplaced burp or worse from her and I have watched her refuse to take the bait on at least fifty occasions.

Are revolutions started because those in revolt rise to offered bait? I think not.

In the case of Cynthia McKinney and the Capitol Hill Police officer, I, like the rest of those reading this story, have not seen what happened. There may be a tape that will surface at some point as we wait to see whether a grand jury will indict her on idiotic charges of assault. I don't know whether the Capitol Hill Cop was white or black, young or old, a rookie or a veteran. I wish it all hadn't happened and I'd bet Cynthia feels the same way.

But then again...

THE GREATEST COMPLIMENT OF MY LIFE

In the spring of 2004 as I was arranging a speech and fundraiser for Cynthia McKinney in Los Angeles wherein we visited a small local museum of the civil rights movement. It was only about two miles from where I had once worked. Pictures of Martin Luther King and [Bobby Kennedy](#) triggered painful memories for me. As I stood transfixed looking at a picture taken circa 1965 of an LAPD black and white with two helmeted officers wielding batons high above their heads in a street fight with blacks, Cynthia McKinney walked up and stood beside me. Quietly, so that only I could hear she said, “That's what you used to do when you used to be white.”

Human being.

John Kennedy and even Dwight Eisenhower were forgiven for having affairs. Bill Clinton was forgiven for a dozen crimes. Ronald Reagan was forgiven for everything. Who will dare call it justice when and if Cynthia McKinney is not forgiven and approved of for being real? There is an easy way for most people to avoid reaching their limits and the risk of being embarrassed. The first rule is: don't do anything risky. Don't stretch the envelope.

With 2,400 American KIA in Iraq, with the US economy ever-shrinking for the poor and middle classes, with US government corruption reeking like a rotting Elephant in the African sun, with voting rights being violated in a gentrifying and whitening New Orleans, with the crimes of 9/11 not only unsolved but covered up by both Democrats and Republicans, there would seem to be many reasons why the envelope needs to be ripped apart a bit.

I have little hope for it now. All the "just get along" folks seem to be winning the day and my friend Cynthia McKinney has some big choices ahead for her. I and many others will be doing all we can from around the country to get her re-elected again this year if that's what she asks.

But let me say this clearly: If Cynthia McKinney wants to start a revolution over a cop who touched her, or anything else, I'll welcome it and I know damn well which side I'll be on.

("...Transformative Tales" cont'd from page 2)

Gary Jones, on the other hand, has parked his green beret after punching his various career tickets, and has become the Inspector General responsible for making it appear that the Army will properly investigate itself in the case of former-NFL player Pat Tillman's death in Afghanistan last year. From an actor in the film, he has now become someone's First Assistant Director.

Tillman became a Ranger.

Ranger. Ranger. Ranger. What do we see in our heads when we hear the word?

It means you serve in a Ranger unit—one thing—or that you simply completed Ranger school—another thing. But people don't generally know that. Gary Jones went to Ranger School. So one can say, General Gary Jones is an Army Ranger. I was an Army Ranger. David—now Diane—Schroer was an Army Ranger. So here we are, linguistically and literarily together, four Rangers; and what are we to make of it. Jones is a General. Schroer is a woman. Goff is a leftist scribe. Tillman is dead.

More than dead, though, Tillman has drawn Jones into a vortex that's also drawing me in, and I'm reaching back to consider Diane Schroer.

Now we together are going to explain something about why Patrick Tillman Sr., Pat Tillman's father, and Mary Tillman, Pat Tillman's mother, are hurling verbal hand grenades at the United States Department of Defense. When the real story of Tillman's death bled through the costume sewn over it by Centcom's Public Affairs liars, Patrick Tillman Sr., an attorney from San Jose, California, told interviewers:

"After it happened, all the people in positions of authority went out

of their way to script this. They purposely interfered with the investigation, they covered it up. I think they thought they could control it, and they realized that their recruiting efforts were going to go to hell in a handbasket if the truth about his death got out. They blew up their poster boy."

The original story of Tillman's death was more out of central casting than Central Command.

So many ghosts here for me. Tillman was in A Company, 2nd Ranger Battalion. I was in the same company in 1979-81.

Tillman's brother, Kevin, was in the same platoon. If you're down for taking vengeance as a nation, the Rangers are your game. That was the attitude after 9-11.

I don't know if Patrick Tillman Sr. and Mary Tillman know it, but their son was not only killed by friendly fire, which I'll describe momentarily, he was killed on a fake mission of fake vengeance by fake commanders. The whole thing was theater.

The Taliban government tried repeatedly to *give* Osama bin Laden to the Americans for a year before 9-11. They even put him under house arrest and delivered his grid coordinates in the hope that a Cruise missile might "rid them of this meddlesome priest." The Bush administration needed bin Laden as a heavy to *associate* with the Taliban, because they planned well before 9-11 to invade Afghanistan in October 2001, about which they even warned the Pakistanis in July of the same year. What they wanted was what they also want in Iraq.

Bases.

No one in this government is talking publicly about Diane Schroer though. Not when they've gone to such trouble to construct the Commander-in-Chief as the big-dicked, blood-and-soil, White Father-Protector of the nation who directs the manly forces of righteous revenge at the Dark Others of exotic Southwest Asia. It doesn't matter that the cosmic cowboy of the Oval Office in fact has never done anything more adventurous than have unprotected sex with besotted strangers in the back of a Lincoln. It's the script that matters.

Tillman's father hit the nail dead-center when he said "scripted." Life hasn't imitated art with this administration. It has been interred in art, like a grave shoveled over a witness who is bound and not dead.

Diane Schroer, who I admit I never got along with worth a damn in Haiti, is now my newest folk hero. While George W. was jerking-off for his frat initiation, and while Dick Cheney was falling asleep during the firearms and alcohol safety course, Diane Schroer was preparing to attend Ranger School. If that doesn't disrupt the gendered war script of this fascist clique, I can't imagine what might.

No, this president, who pranced across the Deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln, dressed up in a fighter pilot costume, and who prances around Crawford in a cowboy costume, must be in command of real Alpha males, and Pat Tillman was right out of central casting when he was killed. A square-jawed football star who sacrificed millions of dollars to carry a rifle in an infantry platoon, and go after the dark menace—and lest anyone think I doubt it, don't. Tillman was a believer. So was his brother.

So was, and is, much of America.

In the Script, there are masculine confrontations with the enemy, and Clancy-esque commanders. In reality, US occupation warfare is grotesquely one-sided. Once an "enemy" is spotted, the troops pull back and get on the radio with the fast movers and gunships, or direct the smart-munitions in with laser guidance systems. That's *why* guerrillas employ car-bombs and IEDs. In the Script, the good guys can direct this lethal force with absolute precision, ensuring there is no "collateral damage." In reality, there is terrible suffering inflicted on civilians, and people would be surprised at how often the "friendlies" are killed and wounded by "friendly fire."

The Script required Tillman's commanders to show progress with a list of objectives reached. So when one of his platoon's vehicles went down, and his platoon leader requested assistance, a "higher" commander—whose name has been redacted in Jones' investigation report—directed platoon leader Lieutenant David Uthlaut that 2nd Platoon (Tillman's platoon) over Uthlaut's objections to move half the element to the small town of Manah. The war in Iraq was going badly, and there was intense pressure to calculate as many "taken objectives" as possible in Afghanistan to repolish the military's bloodied image.

It was nearing dusk, and the road they traveled was flanked by steep high ground, making the platoon ambush bait in any scenario. Uthlaut took one element forward to "secure" Manah for the public relations value, and the other element, which included Tillman's brother, Kevin, stayed back on the road.

The stay-behind was ambushed with rocks, mortars, and small arms from bluffs above them, and they went into a firing frenzy in response. When Uthlaut's element, which included Tillman and an allied Afghan militiaman, tried to return to assist, the stay-behind element—firing in a panic—killed both Pat Tillman and the Afghan guide, even as Tillman was shouting for a cease-fire and had popped a smoke grenade to identify his position.

The cover-up started immediately, because it would be weeks before Kevin Tillman was ever informed that his brother was killed by fratricide, *and he was in the same platoon*. Tillman's gear was burned, a fake story was constructed, and apparently members of the platoon were silenced, or Kevin Tillman wouldn't have had to wait five weeks to find out what had happened 100 meters from him.

Specialist Tillman was posthumously given a lateral promotion to Corporal, awarded a Silver Star and a mendacious official epitaph to support the award that had him charging up a hill at the enemy. He was given—ironically enough, given the unacknowledged gender content of all this—the Jessica Lynch treatment.

Jessica Lynch was reconstructed as a kind of film convention, too: the spunky white American woman, fighting off the Dark hordes until she succumbed, only to be rescued as the plucky damsel in distress by brave special operators. Not only was this lie fabricated like a TV drama, there was actually a film made for the media—which they obediently played—of the faked rescue operation. (The Iraqi hospital staff who had saved her life had attempted to return her days earlier to the Americans, but the Americans drove them back by firing at the transporting ambulance—a violation of the Geneva Conventions.)

Pat Tillman, who really did fit the profile of the All-American (subtext: white) boy, was ready-made. All that was required was

to bury the reality of what happened to him. But these living realities have a way of clawing themselves back out of the ground. My friend, Lydia, remarks on "the thin veneer that football casts over American males' parasitic need to collectively construct and contain ideal masculinities." Construct. Contain.

Families are groups who know each other at a bodily level. We occupy the same physical space. We change the child's diaper. We feed the child and watch the child physically grow. Our skin remembers the touch of the child's skin. We are real together in the real world, which is so much richer and more tragic and more loving and terrifying than any reductionist drama. That is why Mary and Patrick Tillman Sr. are raging.

They will not have their son constructed and contained as someone's instrumental icon. He was flesh and blood to them, and he was taken away in the unspeakably absurd reality of war, not in some iconic masculine representation to make George Bush look like a generalissimo, and a war of plunder look like a morality play. Even the reality of how he was killed was reconstructed as a publicity stunt and a bureaucratic cover-up.

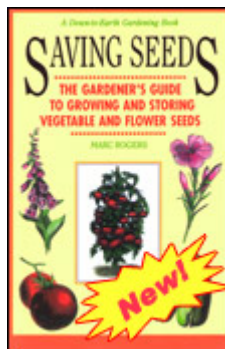
Diane Schroer has forgotten more than George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and Donald Rumsfeld will ever know about warfare. Pat Tillman was killed in fratricidal chaos brought on by an incompetent, ticket-punching off-site commander, by real, young Rangers who were frightened and confused. Gary Jones has been selected to write up the Army's investigation of itself, with all the details of culpability and cynical ambition, and to say—burned evidence, changed testimony, falsified casualty reports, and redacted names—that there was no cover-up. The entire chain of command did not attempt to transform Pat Tillman's life and death into another Bush administration hoax.

Me, I write and remember.

"Saving Seeds"

By Marc Rogers

A gardeners' guide to growing and storing vegetable and flower seeds. This book will tell you all you need to know about how to raise, harvest, and store seeds. This book is a short, straightforward, no-nonsense reference guide; easy to understand and implement.



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IMMIGRATION & UNIFICATION

Part One

by
Stan Goff
Military/ Veterans Affairs Editor

The Property-Deed Version of History

April 13, 2006 1300 PST (FTW) - **T**here is a tendency to zero out history's trip meter on the same day one gets his first property deed. Everything up to that day is transformed into a kind of historical gestation. We were merely in the waiting room of some cosmic maternity ward until that moment, anticipating the arrival of validity.

These kinds of fictions are the floor joists of our denial; and the tectonic immigrant upsurge of the past few weeks has broken through the flooring and forced a lot of people to look at them.

Let's get something straight about immigration. If your ancestors didn't speak Athabaskan, Iriquois, Algonquin, Caddo, Muskegon, Sioux, Numic, Keresan, Hokan, Algic, Benutian, Sahaptian, Tangan, Eskimoan, or Salishan... and you live in the United States, you *are* the immigrant.

You can produce all the property deeds written in English that you want, at some point the paper trail leading to that deed is written on with blood. Property is a legal fiction. So are political boundaries.

And as the old saying goes, "The Mexicans aren't crossing the border. A while back, the border crossed the Mexicans."

The Flutter Valve

In the case of the United States ruling class, those political boundaries have served for some time as a kind of flutter-valve. That valve allows free movement of the one percent of our population that now owns sixty percent of all stock and forty percent of all wealth in the US (the richest two percent owns fifty-six percent (!) of the wealth). They can move freely around the world in search of fifteen-year-old girls who will work in a sweatshop ten hours a day for two dollars, while they are sexually preyed upon by their bosses. And this dominant class can move freely to dispatch armies of their own working class to seize nations with the misfortune of being on or near diminishing underground oceans of fossil energy. But the same valve tightly regulates the movement of working people. So-called "illegal aliens" (how a *person* can be illegal is still a mystery to me) are not kept out of the US; their flow is regulated—officially and unofficially.

These are actually the ideal workers from the point of view of many members of the US business class. Bosses can treat them

like shit, work them like animals, refuse them benefits, and—more frequently than many realize—refuse to pay them. If they say anything, then the boss can make that anonymous call to *la migra*.

It's remarkable to me that people here can still believe these undocumented workers are merely here to cash in on a good deal. Plenty of people still believe that undocumented immigrants actually come here and collect "welfare," when that system—which was only partially available to the poor who were legally-recognized US citizens—was torn to pieces several years ago.

How many of us would take on all the physical risks associated with an illegal border crossing, the dangerous association with the ruthless border-coyotes, living in constant fear of discovery, to live in a place with an unfamiliar culture and a foreign language, along with being treated like shit, worked like animals, refused basic benefits, and sometimes refused pay for work done...for a pay raise?

The Risk Takers

We never stop to ask the question: Why would anyone risk that? What were the actual conditions that drove these folks to undertake such a perilous journey to live such a perilous existence?

That's why people were shocked when millions of immigrant workers and their children walked off their jobs and out of their schools on April 1st. We have seen a very cautious and circumspect population painting our houses, doing our landscaping, cleaning our parks and subdivisions, building our stores, repairing our roofs, babysitting our kids, and making our greasy hamburgers. We did not understand the depth of the resentment at a thousand little offenses borne each day, or the tinsel-strength of the courage it has taken for them to be here at all...because *they* were *them*. The foreigners. The aliens.

When I was at State University of New York - Stony Brook (SUNY-SB) last week, I spoke to a class of young people, many immigrants from all over the world, but mostly the more privileged stratum of immigrants, documented, T's crossed, I's dotted. One young Colombian woman, whose father is a businessman—someone who has partnered at some level with that special class of Americans who pass effortlessly across those international political boundaries—asked me a question.

"I wonder why is it," she remonstrated, "that we can't have a system in Colombia like we have in the United States."

She was a decent person, and her question was sincere, so I was no shorter with her than was absolutely necessary.

"Because," I explained, "it is the same system. The poverty and disorder of Colombia is the price paid for our affluence and order here."

The system is global.

Hunger & Resentment

It is US policy that has indebted the nations of Latin America, that has forced them to export their wealth to the US in order to pay off un-payable external debts. It is that same policy that has transformed the indigenous agricultural systems that fed those

nations and supported the rural populations into an expanding export enterprise—mechanizing production, enclosing massive swaths of land both private and common, and pouring the former rural populations into hellish, overcrowded urban slums. In the countryside, people were poor, with food. In the cities, they are poor, without food. Hungry people take risks.

The seismic uprising of immigrants, led by Latinas across the country is one of the most significant political events of the last decade.

On April 10th, I attended one of hundreds of rallies that happened across the country, this one in Siler City, NC, where several thousand people attended. At that event, as at other events across the country, the participants wore white t-shirts and carried American flags. This is extremely significant, but not because of the specific tactical content of the flags (to demonstrate clearly that this was not anti-American). It was significant because it was a visible demonstration of collective discipline. This is a nightmare for any ruling circle: a population of millions of people, who are absolutely necessary to the smooth continuation of capital accumulation that can be disciplined to a singular political project.

Everyone should see the political comedy film, "A Day Without a Mexican," in which California wakes up one day and all the Latinas have disappeared. Oddly enough, this film and these recent uprisings prefigure the biggest nightmare of all for elites: *an immigrants' general strike*. You can bet the one-percenters have thought about this.

The Bill

In December, clueless as usual to anything outside their own narrow cultural paradigm, Republican leadership—responding to their most brittle-brained, xenophobic base—passed a bill that would not only change the charge of being an undocumented person from a civil to a criminal penalty, but pose criminal penalties on any priest, food bank worker, employer, landlord, or passerby who in any way assisted said undocumented "criminal." The bill further proposed an Israeli-like 700-mile "fence" along the US-Mexico border.

The implications of this, of course, even for the US business class, were astounding...and well nigh apocalyptic. So, with John McCain as their spokesperson, the Senate offered an "alternative" proposal: Allow workers to stay for *ten years* (!) with guest worker visas (called *braceros*, the status "enjoyed" by contract stoop labor in the lettuce, strawberry, and tomato fields) as the pre-condition for applying for full citizenship. Meanwhile, employers would hold them in virtual indentured servitude.

David Bacon writes in "Congress Must Face Reality - Immigrants Want Equality":

A concerted effort by some lobbyists is underway in Washington, however, to convince legislators that guest worker status, while unpleasant, is something immigrants themselves are prepared to accept. But outside the beltway their proposal is meeting a rising tide of rejection. In New York City, Desis Rising Up & Moving and 20 other grassroots groups formed Immigrant Communities In Action, and condemned both House and Senate bills for not halting the wave of detentions and deportations visited on Muslim communities since 9/11.

Another coalition, which includes the National Mobilization Against Sweatshops, the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association, and the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, also rejects guestworker programs. Like the Teamsters, these groups say Congress should abolish employer sanctions instead, since they're often used to retaliate against undocumented workers who demand labor rights.

The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights criticizes both the Senate and House bills because they hold "no promise of fairness in immigration policy and would undermine the rights, economic health and safety of all immigrants and their children. Congress needs to go back to the drawing board to come up with genuine, positive and fair proposals."

The counter-proposal, and not just the initial House bill that would criminalize half the country, was the straw that broke the camel's back. The sleeping giant that was Hispano-America awoke, and when it stirred, the rest of immigrant America woke with it.

IMMIGRATION & UNIFICATION

Part Two

by
Stan Goff

The Vortex

April 19, 2006 1000 PST (FTW) - The immigrant uprising of April 1st has given the people in charge cause to reach for the Maalox.

I say immigrants, and not just Hispano-Latinas, because when I was at SUNY-SB on April 5th talking with anti-war organizers there, they described a very interesting phenomenon. At SUNY-SB, a huge fraction of the student body are immigrants, from all over the world. Latin America, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, South Asia, East Asia, Africa...everywhere. While the core of the immigrant uprising was Hispano-Latina, when *they* rose up in conjunction with the April 1st immigrant uprising at the school, the other immigrants were swept up in the energy of the uprising and joined in. All of the immigrant students had various grievances associated with discrimination, stereotyping, and the daily affronts experienced in common associated with xenophobia and racism.

To put the point on it, at the debate in which I participated that evening at SUNY-SB, with around 500 people and at least 40 Muslim students, my debate opponent, a member of the SUNY-SB history faculty, voiced a blatant and execrable Islamophobic screed as his core argument in support of the war in Iraq. The offense given to the Muslim students was incalculable.

The potential of this immigrant uprising is also incalculable.

Certain people have special cultural authority to speak to certain issues. Ex-cops are the best critics of a racist criminal justice system. Ex-CIA agents are the best critics of US covert operations. Ex-soldiers are the best critics of war.

While the war—and with it things like the Fitzgerald investigation—had the Bush administration on the ropes, and while Katrina exposed them even further, the April Uprising has hit them like a surprise overhand right.

Now Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) is studying ways to connect with the April Uprising of immigrants, and that could be the step that brings this seismic immigrant uprising together with the anti-war movement.

The Veterans

The political reality is that the war will stop only when masses of people, who have power and leverage over decision makers, force the war to stop. The actual people who are likely to make that happen are already organized, but they are organized at various levels. Everyone is organized. A family is an organization. A workplace is an organization. A sports team is an organization. A bridge club is an organization. A church is an organization. A political party is an organization. Good organizers don't talk people *into* organizing. They go to where people are already organized, based on the needs and issues of that organization, and identify points of unity and potential for collaboration.

A very high level of organization is a social movement. There are several social movements out there, and they have varying dimensions of coherence and influence. There is an anti-war movement, of which many of us are a part, and for which some of us work. We want to expand and strengthen the coherence and influence of this organization. An organization like US Labor Against the War, for example, is designed to attempt the integration of the trade union movement into the anti-war movement. This would accomplish the unification of two very powerful social movements. Other powerful movements are the Black Freedom Movement, the Women's Liberation Movement, the Environmental Justice Movement, etc. etc. etc.

Unification

The job of an anti-war movement is to carry the anti-war message and mission—wherever possible—into these other movements. And their job is to carry their message and mission into other movements. This process of unification is difficult and time-consuming, but it is absolutely necessary to build each of these movements into a more general social struggle for peace, justice, and real democracy.

The size and scope of the immigrants' uprising is hard to overestimate. It came on like a wildcat strike, and it has substantially weakened the very people who oppose us in our mission. And IVAW has a very significant "Hispano-Latina caucus." These are people who have themselves faced everything from garden-variety prejudice to outright attacks on themselves or family members in their own lives. They speak fluent Spanish. There were two issues that preoccupied the demonstrators I saw on April 10th. One was that they all paid taxes (Do we remember "taxation without representation"), and the other was that the government didn't mind recruiting their kids for the military.

That last one is IVAW's issue.

While the percentage of Latinas in military service in 2000 was 11 percent, compared to a general Latina population nationwide of 14 percent, when the military began to be strapped for personnel with the deepening quagmire in Iraq by early 2004, it turned its eye on Hispano-Latina communities—and the question of citizenship did not escape the Recruiting Command. This had begun with the U.S. Army Recruiting Command's Strategic Partnership Plan for 2002-2007, in anticipation of the Iraq War, which stated:

"Priority areas [for recruitment] are designated primarily as the cross section of weak labor opportunities and college-age population as determined by both [the] general and Hispanic population."

Titus Peachey writes in "Military Recruitment, Communities of Color and Immigrants":

In July of 2002, President Bush announced that "non-naturalized soldiers serving honorably in the war on terrorism could significantly step up the process of citizenship and apply immediately or upon enlisting."²³ While this opportunity is open to all nationalities, the high number of Latino immigrants makes it particularly appealing to this group.

The Hispanic Access Initiative "...provides for ROTC recruiters to especially target colleges and high schools with a sizable Latino student body."²⁴ While the Reserve Officer Training Corps program is officially not a recruiting effort, around 40% of JROTC graduates enlist in the military. African American and Latino students make up over 50% of the participants in JROTC programs.²⁵

A recent policy change in the Army allows the number of enlistees without a high school diploma to rise to 10%, up from 8% last year. While high school drop-outs can be found among all racial groups, the rate is particularly high among Mexican-Americans. U.S. born Mexican-Americans have a drop-out rate of 30%. The number doubles to 61% for new immigrants.²⁶

So it is clear that the very design of military recruitment, with its grand offers of money for college, effectively targets those who do not have other good options. As recruiters strain to meet recruitment goals in an increasingly difficult environment, they put their time and effort into those most likely to enlist, even if these enlistees are pushed there by circumstance. For some, the circumstance is immigration.

Hispano-Latina members of IVAW will speak to this issue in the venues that this uprising will provide and is providing. This is a war issue *and* this is an immigrant issue. This is one of those key points of unity. And with this population now standing up as a social movement that is losing its fear and sensing its own latent power, the anti-war movement can win over the advanced and even intermediate layers of this immigrant rights movement to a position opposing the war. This substantially strengthens the struggle to stop the war, and to bring down the administration that has presided over the militarization not just of foreign policy, but domestic policy. (That's what neo-conservatism is, in a nutshell.)

But it also substantially strengthens immigrants themselves. The American business class will not watch a bunch of Arizona “minute-men” dictate a national policy that strips them of this key sector of the American working class. In particular, they are not going to quietly stand by while the inevitable idea of an immigrants’ general strike gestates in the womb of this newfound political agency. So they will be forced to stand down this reactionary impulse.

An immigrants’ general strike would hit the power switch on the American economy. We should sponsor potlucks at our houses and show *A Day Without a Mexican*, just to make sure everyone understands how powerful this latent power really is.

Now this dominant class is faced with the political crisis of the Republican Party as these calloused workers from the south call the question between the corporate wing of the party and the white theocrats of the reactionary wing. Many of the more libertarian partisans of the party have already abandoned them over the war, the domestic spying and repression, and their fear of the theocrats.

This is an historic uprising, and it is an historic opportunity for IVAW. They have connected with the Gulf Coast, and with it the strategic South and the Black Freedom Movement, during the recent “Walkin’ to New Orleans” march. That was a very important step forward in both their organizational and political development. Now they may be taking another quantum leap.

This awakening giant will need allies. I hope we are all alert to this, and prepared.

Things are getting mighty interesting.

Se habla espanol aqui. Y se habla el poder del pueblo.

THE FUTURE AT WAR WITH THE PAST

While South Central’s Urban Farmers Face Eviction, Peak Oil Threatens Global Food Supply

By
Jamey Hecht
Senior Staff Writer

March 22, 2006 1200 PST (FTW) - LOS ANGELES - **A** few short weeks ago Jan Lundberg, the founder of www.culturechange.org, gave FTW [a rich and colorful account of L.A.’s South Central Farm](#), a 13-acre oasis of traditional agriculture in the middle of a bleak warehouse district. But in the brief interval since that piece appeared, the [South Central Farmers Feeding Families](#) have endured a rollercoaster of anxiety, relief, and new anxiety as their pending [eviction was postponed](#) at the last possible moment. They live in suspense between one such episode and the next, but somehow the serial reprieves keep coming and the 150 species of edible and medicinal plants

from Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala keep growing.

In a complex case like this one, it’s often best to begin with a timeline:¹

May 1, 1986

Seeking a site for a proposed power-generating waste incinerator, the City uses eminent domain to force the purchase of a 14 acre lot from Alameda-Barbara Investment Company, whose major investor is real estate lawyer Ralph Horowitz. ABIC receives \$4,786,372 for the lot. This is, apparently, far below market value and may help to explain Mr. Horowitz’ subsequent zeal.

Late 1980’s

Public protest forces the abandonment of the incinerator project.

November 5, 1991

A judgment is handed down which provides that if, within 10 years of the date of the judgment, the City determines that the property is “surplus” (no longer needed for public use) and that it should be sold, the City will enter into negotiations (not to exceed one year) with ABIC to sell the property back to ABIC.

1992

In the wake of the Rodney King uprising, Doris Bloch of the L.A. Regional Food Bank and others move to create a community garden of over 360 individual plots on the otherwise idle site. The following year, as Bloch retires, the gardeners themselves begin to organize their own farming in the absence of further Food Bank initiative. As UCLA medical students later observed in the solidarity message to Mayor Villarraigosa, “When Mayor Bradley granted this land to the community after the 1992 uprisings, it was to address... economic inequities.”²

1994

The City sells the property to its own L. A. Harbor Department. More precisely, the Richard Riordan administration transfers the property from the Department of Public Works to the Harbor Department, moving \$13.3 million from Harbor to Public Works as the price.³ That figure is closer to the market value of the property.

The Food Bank and the Harbor create a mutually revocable permit allowing the former to continue running the site as a community garden. Arrangements are made between the Food Bank and the individual farmers, who eventually form South Central Farmers Feeding Families.

1995

By this time, Horowitz’ interest in the property is rekindled, and negotiations begin for ABIC – now the Libaw-Horowitz Investment Company, or LHIC – to buy the property back from the City.

October 1996

The City and LHIC make a purchase agreement, fixing the sale amount at \$5,227,200.⁴ Execution of the agreement requires City Council approval, but such approval is not obtained and the sale falls through.

April 24, 2002

After a lapse of six years, LHIC files suit (*Libaw-Horowitz Investment Company v. City of Los Angeles et al.* (Super. Ct. Los Angeles County, No. BC272571) against the City and the Harbor Department for breach of the agreement to sell the property, seeking enforcement of the agreement and monetary damages. At the direction of the Harbor Department Board of Commissioners, City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo enters into settlement negotiations with LHIC. The eventually-approved settlement includes (1) dismissal of the LHIC suit, (2) sale of the property to LHIC for \$4.5 million, and (3) LHIC's donation of 2.7 acres to the City for park and recreation purposes.

June 3, 2003

Any settlement will require the approval of Councilwoman Jan Perry, whose district includes the property. She approves, having made what seems to be an arrangement with Horowitz designed to keep those 2.7 acres public (no longer as part of a garden growing food, but as an athletic field).

August 13, 2003

Pursuant to Charter section 273(c) – which governs the use of City-owned property in the settlement of lawsuits – the City Council unanimously (13 members present, two absent) approves the settlement *in closed session*.

August 26, 2003

No mayoral veto of that approval is forthcoming, and the settlement is official.

September 23, 2003

The City informs the Food Bank that its tenancy will end within 30 days because the property has been sold.

December 11, 2003

The City transfers title to the property to Ralph Horowitz and the Horowitz Family Trust.

January 8, 2004

The Horowitz Group gives notice to the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank that its permit will terminate on February 29, 2004. As of this writing, the Food Bank claims to have given notice to the gardeners at this point, a claim the gardeners dispute.

February 2004

South Central Farmers Feeding Families and 12 individual plaintiffs who had farmed at the property for periods of up to 12 years file a complaint

against Horowitz, the City, and the Food Bank.

The complaint's six causes of action (with a seventh added March 11, 2004) boil down to this: by acting in closed session, the City Council failed to inform the public of its decision to sell the property, thus violating U.S. Code and the California Constitution. The Farmers win a temporary restraining order that prevents the otherwise immediate demolition of the garden.

Let's look directly at the Appellate Court's own summary of what happened next: ⁵

On March 16, 2004, the trial court granted a preliminary injunction continuing the temporary restraining order already in effect. The trial court found that plaintiffs were likely to prevail on their claim that the City sold the property without complying with City Administrative Code sections 7.21 and 7.22. Those regulations stated that City-owned real property could be sold if the City Council determined that the City no longer required the property and that the public interest or necessity required its sale. Before the City made this determination, it had to obtain an appraisal of the property's fair market value, a recommendation of a minimum sale price from the Department of General Services, a recommendation from the Bureau of Engineering for the reservation of property, easements, or rights to be retained by the City, and verification from the City Planning Department that other city departments did not require the property for City use. The trial court found the City did not comply with these requirements.

Translation: the Code says the City has to wade through three of its own departments before it can sell property that it decides is surplus. But the City says that doesn't apply, since the sale is part of a previous settlement. The trial court disagrees, and points out that nobody ever declared the property to be surplus in the first place. So they grant the injunction; the Farmers get to stay for a while, and the City and LHIC have to lay off. Next, of course, both the City and LHIC file appeals to get that injunction reversed.

In its appeal, the City held that "*Imposing surplus property procedures compromises the City Council's litigation settlement authority.*" But the Farmers claimed the opposite, and the dispute now hinged upon a conflict in the law. Either the rules for selling surplus city property (Charter section 385) apply in all cases, and the City is in trouble for failing to follow those rules, or the City's power to settle litigation (Charter section 273) overrides those rules, and the Farmers are the ones in trouble.

The Appellate Court found that the City's right to settle litigation was inviolable. The sale is good; the City and Horowitz win; the Farmers lose. Here's the kernel of the Court's explanation:

We conclude that Charter section 385 does not clearly and explicitly curtail the exercise of the City's statutory authority, as confirmed by its charter, to convey property in settlement of litigation. Charter section 273(c) clearly and explicitly gives the City Council authority to approve settle-

ment of litigation that does not involve only the payment or receipt of money, and thus governs the transfer of the property as part of the City's settlement of the LHIC litigation. The grant of the preliminary injunction must therefore be reversed.

This is ironic. The Farmer's collective seems like a proxy for the collective public, struggling against the power of the individual capitalist fat-cat (Horowitz). But Horowitz gets the victory through an enhancement of public power: the power of the City to settle its old lawsuit with him. That lawsuit required the Los Angeles Harbor Department to sell the property back to him for peanuts — around five million dollars. All he had to do was pay that relatively small sum — and one more thing: of the 13 acre total, he had to donate 2.6 acres for a soccer field. That soccer field clause seems to have been the clincher that gave the settlement its required approval from the City Council. The beneficiary was Councilwoman Jan Perry — whose personal approval was also required — along with any of her constituents who might want to play soccer in the warehouse district.

March 3, 2006

In a City Hall press conference, "Deputy Mayor Frank issued his assurances that the Mayor's office is working to prevent the eviction. They are currently working to get a contract option agreement with the developer, Ralph Horowitz. He stated that Horowitz is asking for \$16.35 million for the land. To date \$6 million has been raised from a private donor and the Trust for Public Land has put forth \$3 million. The contract option would give 30 days for the remaining funds to be found and forestall the pending eviction."⁶

Frank also announces a pending option agreement between the City and LHIC whereby the Harbor Department will give Horowitz \$50,000 of "carrying costs" in exchange for an additional one-month stay of execution.

March 11, 2006

The L.A. Times publishes "Los Angeles Gothic," an editorial on the case which glosses over the complex issues surrounding Horowitz's claim on the property and simply treats his ownership as an unquestionable fait accompli: "The bottom line is that the courts ruled for Horowitz."⁷

March 12, 2006

After the Mayor's office receives over 2,000 phone calls from supporters of the Farmers, the option agreement is achieved. Henceforth the stay of eviction will remain in effect during the appeals process.

March 13, 2006

Juan Xavier Santos publishes an emotive response to the LA Times editorial, called "A Magic So Strong: The South Central Farm Must Live."⁸

Santos places the case in the larger historical context, namely 500 years of land expropriation perpetrated by Euro-American elites upon indigenous (mostly Aztec and Mayan) peoples. That larger framework is advantageous because its moral authority subsumes the minutiae of the legal process, but disadvantageous for the same reason, since it leaves the de jure legality of the court's ruling untouched while condemning the de facto injustice of inequality. Santos does touch on the legal issues, but suggests that the City's sale of the property was simply illegal. Deeply immoral or not, grossly imprudent or not, the decision wasn't straightforwardly illegal since it honored one portion of the law at the expense of another. And lest we forget: the Courts interpret the law, but their alleged dedication to abstract principles can blind them to the meaning of the facts. Recall the Rodney King beating case, in which horrific police brutality was excused in court, leading to the uprising whose consequences include the formation of the Community Garden at issue here.

"Why should they have the use of the land indefinitely, permanently? I don't fathom that very well," Horowitz told NPR in January.⁹ According to Deputy Mayor Frank, Horowitz estimates the value of the property at \$25 million.¹⁰ That number may be exorbitant, since it apparently includes projected profits from a warehouse Horowitz hopes to build on the site. The buyout option currently on the table is for the City (i.e., the public) to pay Horowitz 16 million, nearly three times the price he was given in the original 1986 eminent domain seizure, a price which was roughly matched by Horowitz' own purchase price when the City sold the property back to him. The "fair market value" of these 13 acres in the relevant years 1986, 1993, and 2005 is hard to determine, since any appraisers may or may not have been influenced by the considerable political forces at work.

Clara Irazábal, Professor of Policy, Planning, and Development at the University of Southern California framed the issue this way:

[T]he relevant question is not whether this urban farm should be preserved. This is the wrong question and one that diminishes the stature of your office and the trust we have invested in you. The question is, rather, how can we best help multiply urban farms like this one throughout Los Angeles and cities of the Americas and the world. As the era of oil inescapably comes to an end, we are going to be faced with the need, whether we like it or not, to live more compactly, thrifty, cooperatively, and in more direct connection with, and responsible for, the production of our own food. In this context, not only [sic] does the South Central Farm not constitute a backward use of land in one of the largest and more prominent and modern cities of the world. Instead, it is a model for the future (and the future is now), one that can support the survival of our growing urban civilization. Maintaining the South Central Farm, Los Angeles and you as its mayor have the unique opportunity to become world visionaries and trail breakers.¹¹

Trail breakers are [people](#) who move ahead of current trends and facilitate the progress of everybody else toward survival and the possibility of eventual flourishing. Most people assume that economic growth and commercial expansion are permanent trends, but a few hours at the [Peak Oil portion of FTW](#) is just one of

myriad ways to learn how wrong that assumption is. Current trends actually point toward a massive and painful correction in every economic sector, followed by social upheaval and a terribly urgent effort to adapt. When the energy crash hit Cuba, its people endured a frightening interval of undernourishment called “the Special Period.” It happened after Soviet oil exports dried up, but before the Cuban people learned to [powerdown](#) and grow their own food. We are headed toward a Special Period of our own. Right now we are riding the crest of energy extraction. [Just past the Peak](#), we can only see the ground falling away beneath us if we open our eyes; otherwise, we simply feel how high we’re riding and all seems well enough.

Let me quote [Megan Quinn of Community Solutions on Havana, Cuba](#):

Cubans started to grow local organic produce out of necessity, developed bio-pesticides and bio-fertilizers as petrochemical substitutes, and incorporated more fruits and vegetables into their diets. Since they couldn’t fuel their aging cars, they walked, biked, rode buses, and carpooled...

Cubans are also replacing petroleum-fed machinery with oxen, and their urban agriculture reduces food transportation distances. **Today an estimated 50 percent of Havana’s vegetables come from inside the city, while in other Cuban towns and cities urban gardens produce from 80 percent to more than 100 percent of what they need.** In turning to gardening, individuals and neighborhood organizations took the initiative by identifying idle land in the city, cleaning it up, and planting.

When the Australian permaculturists came to Cuba they set up the first permaculture demonstration project with a \$26,000 grant from the Cuban government.

Los Angeles is blessed with 350 permaculturists whose work is on display for study and emulation at the South Central Farm. All we have to do is listen and learn. Let’s hope we get the chance.

The question at this moment is: Gardens or warehouses? Watch this space as *FTW* tracks which of the political, legal, economic, and moral possibilities of the South Central Farmers’ case will prevail in the continuing crisis to secure the future of this beloved L.A. farm.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ The following timeline of events is based on a composite of (a) the APPEAL (2nd Appellate District, Division Three: (B175065), SOUTH CENTRAL FARMERS FEEDING FAMILIES et al., Plaintiffs

and Respondents, v. CITY OF LOS ANGELES et al., Defendants and Appellants. B175065, Los Angeles County Super. Ct. No. BC311110; (b) “What We Are About,” a mission statement from the website of the farmers; and (c) Perry Crowe, “Down on the Farm,” a March 9 article in *L.A. City Beat* (Vol. 4, No. 11).

² http://www.southcentralfarmers.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=78&Itemid=2

³ “TEZOZOMOC: The organizer with South Central Farmers on surviving eviction, feeding the poor, and rethinking city parks,” by Dean Kuipers, *CityBeat*, April 27, 2005. <http://www.lacitybeat.com/article.php?id=1955&IssueNum=98%20>

⁴ This low price is consistent with the \$4.8 million Horowitz originally received in the eminent domain seizure, but inconsistent with the \$13.3 million price of the sale between Public Works and the Harbor Department.

⁵ SOUTH CENTRAL FARMERS FEEDING FAMILIES et al., Plaintiffs and Respondents, v. CITY OF LOS ANGELES et al., Defendants and Appellants. B175065, Los Angeles County Super. Ct. No. BC311110

⁶ <http://la.indymedia.org/news/2006/03/149011.php>

⁷ http://www.latimes.com/news/local/los_angeles_metro/la-ed-farm11mar11.1.5646747.story?coll=la-commun-los_angeles_metro&ctrack=1&cset=true

⁸ “The Mexican Indian hero Emiliano Zapata had a different idea – that the land belongs to those who work it.

On that premise, a premise Zapata paid for with his life, communal lands called *ejidos* developed in Mexico, protected by its constitution. That is, until NAFTA. Since then some six million indigenous farmers have been driven from the land, often at the point of a gun. They were driven out in the name of profit and progress to starve, to make their way in the lost cities of Mexico, to the alienated ghettos and barrios of LA.

But here, at the South Central Farm, Mayan farmers gave new life to ancient heirloom seeds, a rebirth and renewal of a heritage of that has continued, uninterrupted, for thousand of years; since the time before; since the ants taught Quetzalcoatl to grow corn. With others, these farmers grew corn and community.

The LA Times wants them driven out again.” <http://la.indymedia.org/news/2006/03/150002.php?theme=default>

⁹ <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5160542>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ http://www.fromthewilderness.com/PDF/SCF_Mayor.pdf

CORRECTION to

“What Do I Do With My Money?: Advice from Mike Ruppert at the Cusp of Collapse.”

After reading my alert on “[What Do I Do With My Money?](#)” earlier this month, Catherine Austin Fitts called me and rightly set me straight on a number of key points. She strongly suggested I listen to her latest seminar “Solari Portfolio Strategy -- the Power of Financial Intimacy.” And so I did.

Financial intimacy is about having intimate knowledge and a heartfelt connection with how your money works, understanding that what your money touches, you touch; and it's about financing sustainable solutions that protect and support our families and natural resources. You begin with your home, as in choosing where to live and investing in your own self-sufficiency, and then organize your investments around that. And yes, absolutely eliminate debt ASAP where practical, invest local, and explore using gold and silver as insurance (the percentage depends on your individual situation) if you are prepared to manage the volatility in these markets. As a side benefit, when enough people shift to financially intimate portfolios, then what Catherine calls our “tapeworm economy” will transform into a financially intimate economy.

It's all covered in detail in her audio seminar, where she walks you through concrete examples using a sample portfolio.

Coincidentally, due to accelerating deterioration in the U.S. financial picture, Catherine has just slashed this seminar to half price through April 3 along with the companion audio seminar on socially responsible investing:

. Is SRI Hazardous to Our Wealth?

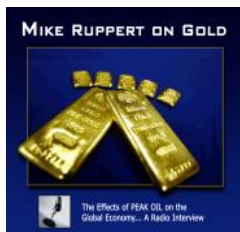
. <http://votesolari.com/solari/home.php?cat=36&partner=ftw>

. Solari Portfolio Strategy -- the Power of Financial Intimacy

. <http://votesolari.com/solari/home.php?cat=37&partner=ftw>

Sorry Catherine; although we do sometimes make mistakes, the one thing we always do is correct them. -- MCR

Global Economy is a subject near and dear to Mr. Ruppert's heart. Spend a short time listening to what Mike told a captive radio audience on [Gold-line's American Advisor](#) recently. Hear what Mike has to say about the current state of affairs, especially as it concerns the ever rising gold market.



The CD is an audio version only and is over 26 minutes in length.

**Prices are only:
\$8.95 (Shipping and handling is included
in the price!) for the CD (Audio)**

BIODIVERSITY, GMO, AND THE FUTURE

by
Jamey Hecht, Ph.D.
Senior Staff Writer

April 20, 2006 0900 PST – (FTW) - Biodiversity is an issue that gets us in the heart when we behold the fate of gorgeous megafauna like the polar bears (who are starting to turn up [drowned](#), as global warming melts the planet's ice caps). But it can hit us a lot harder in the belly when corporate agribusiness wagers our food security on a handful of genetically brittle monocrops.

Because of die-hard muckraking activism, it's now common knowledge that Monsanto and other biotech firms are off and running in a race to patent as many lucrative organisms as the legal system—and popular outrage—will permit. In a comment on the www.axisoflogic.com story “Patenting A Pig,” FTW reported last August that Monsanto filed a patent application that would give it control over: a variety of desirable genetic traits, a modified swine breeding process (actually little more than a longer applicator for artificial insemination)¹, and all the pigs born as a result. This horrified lots of people, and Greenpeace ran an effective campaign to put pressure on the agribusiness giant and on government officials; but the patent process can take several years, and it's too early to tell whether the pig-patenters will succeed.

For all the ink spilled about the ethical nuances of human cloning, patenting mammals may dwarf human cloning on the horror index. The dangers of human cloning generally have to do with rights: clones with desirable traits might out-compete people who lack them; clones might be discriminated against; programs and decision makers might exploit clones; etc. On the other hand, farm animals have no rights, which is why they've been the victims of a vast and appalling factory-farm system for decades. What the patents add is the idea that the corporation not only owns the individual animals, but also the genotypes that code for them. In effect, Monsanto would own the process, the animal, and the very possibility of the animal's existence.

My comments at the time were these:

Monsanto has something important in common with both Captain Ahab (from Herman Melville's 1851 novel, *Moby-Dick*) and the Nazi regime. Each represents a strange combination of rationality and madness. As I've written [elsewhere](#), Melville's captain has an utterly irrational obsession with the White Whale, but his suicidal pursuit of that creature draws upon years of technical expertise and deliberate planning. He and his men on the ship *Pequod* were supposed to be hunting as many sperm whales as possible, in order to harvest oil—but the whales, and therefore the oil, were being depleted at a rate far faster than their natural replenishment. And just when the commercial rationale for hunting the whales became untenable, along comes Ahab the damaged genius on his hunt for Moby-Dick, this time for revenge, not oil. Ring a bell?

Like Ahab, the Nazis were bent on death in a way that failed to distinguish between their own murderous ambitions and the cultic yearning for suicide that helped to draw them into an unwinnable war—one which the Nazis lost in part because they failed to secure Russian oil reserves in Baku. Scarce resources were still being diverted to the strategically useless death camps long after it became unmistakably clear, even to the stupidest Nazis on the team, that the war would end in defeat. The avowed motive for Hitler's genocidal expansion into the territory of the Slavs and others was "*Lebensraum*"—room for living, not totally different from the American Manifest Destiny with its small-pox blankets. But the big difference was the Nazi's cool efficiency—the bizarre prominence of rational calculation in the midst of the most irrational depravity. What Himmler had that Custer did not was the [combination of bureaucracy, technology, and an ideology of transgressive, taboo-breaking, hubristic scientism](#). There's that tolling bell again.

[Monsanto](#) is pursuing a rational policy of the maximization of profit. Like all bureaucracies, its internal organization works by conducting ethical responsibility away from individual actors. You can sell your own mother to perdition, provided your uniform (with a pay-stub in the pocket) shows that the person responsible is not really you: it's the corporate person. Left to work its designs, Monsanto will extend and maintain its control over the world's food supply—just at the moment when grain stocks and yields are falling farther short of demand, and Peak Oil and Gas begin to close in on the kitchen table. Large scale famine would be difficult to avoid. How can they permit themselves this behavior? By narrowing their focus on the wrong object (profit), and keeping it there [no matter what](#).

Breeding disease resistant pigs—rather than raising healthy pigs—is a Faustian bargain: it will produce germ-resistant herds, but it will make the germs more powerful. Any pathogenic germ population that gets blocked by a newly common swine gene will include a few little guys running around who just don't get blocked. So they get to proliferate in the vacuum left by their blocked peers and presto: another germ-blocking gene is superseded by a mutated new bug.²

Furthermore, genetically modified pigs are not likely to escape and somehow breed with non-GMO pigs (though GMO animals do sometimes slip through the controls³). But GMO crops are far harder to control, and Monsanto has extorted millions of dollars by suing farmers whose fields are found to be contaminated with the company's patented seeds.

A new report by the Center for Food Safety sheds light on the money involved:

The report finds that, in general, Monsanto's efforts to prosecute farmers can be divided into three stages: investigations of farmers; out-of-court settlements; and litigation against farmers Monsanto believes are in breach of contract or engaged in patent infringement. CFS notes in the report that, to date, Monsanto has filed 90 lawsuits against American farmers in 25 states that involve 147 farmers and 39 small businesses or farm companies. Monsanto has set aside an annual budget of

\$10 million dollars and a staff of 75 devoted solely to investigating and prosecuting farmers.

"Monsanto would like nothing more than to be the sole source for staple crop seeds in this country and around the world," said Joseph Mendelson, CFS legal director. "And it will aggressively overturn centuries-old farming practices and drive its own clients out of business through lawsuits to achieve this goal."

The largest recorded judgment CFS has found thus far in favor of Monsanto as a result of a farmer lawsuit is \$3,052,800.00. Total recorded judgments granted to Monsanto for lawsuits amount to \$15,253,602.82. Farmers have paid a mean of \$412,259.54 for cases with recorded judgments. Many farmers have to pay additional court and attorney fees and are sometimes even forced to pay the costs Monsanto incurs while investigating them.

So that's one major racket: build a seed with a desirable trait that you've patented, physically spread the seed beyond your own land (or just watch while it spreads itself), then sue everyone whose farms have been tainted with your patented seed. The most famous case is that of Canola farmer [Percy Schmeiser](#), whose fields became contaminated with Monsanto's frankenfood. The corporation sued for \$15 per acre, and there's been a protracted legal battle. What is the supposedly desirable trait patented by Monsanto? Resistance to a potentially toxic herbicide called "Roundup"—manufactured by Monsanto. Without knowing it, we're often buying genetically modified food whose sole agricultural purpose is to sustain massive doses of petrochemical poison. Who wants in?

What trumps even this piracy for sheer hubris is the biotech industry's "terminator seeds," or "Genetic Use Restriction Technologies." These seeds grow new generations of food crops (say, corn) that are *entirely sterile*. You can eat the new corn, but if you plant it, the seeds just rot in the dirt. That way, you have to keep coming back to the corporation for each generation of seed you want to plant and, ultimately, each ear of corn you want to eat. And as with the "Roundup Ready" trait, pollen from fields of terminator crops can blow in the wind until everyone is growing patented, expensive, sterile foodcrops. The resulting mass starvation would amount to genocide. In such a world, farmers who lack the money to pay Monsanto will starve—and Monsanto will get nothing. The more benign explanation (though this warps the word "benign") is that the Big M is simply squeezing the whole world, getting the money from those who have it, and killing those who don't as an accidental side effect of corporate greed. The more sinister interpretation is that in a world of rapidly diminishing resources—especially water, crucial to third-world irrigation—Monsanto is providing powerful elites with a crucial service: depopulation.

One of the most important forces for improvement on the food security front is an organization founded by Indian physicist Vandana Shiva, called [Navdanya](#) or "Nine Seeds." The Navdanya Movement protects indigenous peoples from *biopiracy*, the absurd-yet-legal drawing-up of patents on naturally occurring organisms. Biopiracy may be a crime against humanity, but it's not illegal because it can only be perpetrated by powerful corporate interests, among which Monsanto is only the largest. Here's a striking remark from "For Rice is now *Oryza Syngenta!*" by Devinder Sharma:

The tussle over the monopoly control of rice extends to its 12 chromosomes. These chromosomes contain 430 million base pairs of DNA, and are expected to have about 50,000 genes. Syngenta, in collaboration with Myriad Genetics Inc. of USA, has beaten Monsanto in the game by sequencing more than 99.5 per cent of the rice genome. Syngenta has already made it clear that it will restrict access to the genomic map and expects proprietary control over any research carried out with the information.

But it isn't only the vampires of the biological patent game who threaten global food security. Even without the chicanery of patenting and the brave new world of genetically modified [franken-food](#), there is the sheer folly of betting everything on a minimal range of crop variety. Daniel Nierenberg and Brian Halweil explain in the 2005 Worldwatch *State of the World Annual*:

Since the beginning of the last century, 75% of the genetic diversity of agricultural crops has been lost. In China, 10,000 varieties of wheat were under cultivation in 1949; by the 1970s only 1,000 were still in production. Just 20%—one fifth—of the maize varieties reported in Mexico in 1930 are known today. And farmers in the Philippines once cultivated thousands of rice varieties, but by the 1980s just two varieties took up 98% of the growing area.

Advocates of GM monocrops cite technology's success in fighting insects and fungal blights. But traditional farming methods include (d) a vast trove of accumulated knowledge about such pests and their nontoxic suppression. At a huge cost in unintended consequences, GM mitigates the failings of the large-scale industrial farming from which it sprang—not traditional farming, which had its own ways of preserving crops from pests. Take a look at this abstract of [a key paper by agroecologist Miquel Altieri](#):

Biodiversity is a salient feature of traditional farming systems in developing countries and performs a variety of renewal processes and ecological services in agroecosystems. It is of fundamental importance to understand the role biodiversity can play in reducing pest problems, if vegetation management is to be used effectively as a primary IPM [integrated pest management] tactic in small-scale sustainable agriculture. The maintenance of biodiversity in traditional agroecosystems is not random, but depends on a complex set of indigenous technical knowledge systems (ethnoscience).

If you want to establish control over the range of plants available to farmers, you have to stop them from [exchanging seeds with one another](#). We close with a quotation from "Monocultures, Monopolies, Myths And The Masculinisation Of Agriculture" by Vandana Shiva, Director of India's Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology:

The attempt to prevent farmers from saving seed is not just being made through new IPR laws, it is also being made through the new genetic engineering technologies. Delta and Pine Land (now owned by Monsanto) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have established new partnership through a jointly held patent (No.5723785) to seed which has been genetically engineered to

ensure that it does not germinate on harvest thus forcing farmers to buy seed at each planting season. Termination of germination is a means for capital accumulation and market expansion.

However, abundance in nature and for farmers shrinks as markets grow for Monsanto. When we sow seed, we pray, "May this seed be exhaustless." Monsanto and the USDA on the other hand are stating, "Let this seed be terminated so that our profits and monopoly is exhaustless."

¹ "We applied for a patent...for some specific reproductive processes in swine," said Monsanto spokesman Chris Horner. "Any pigs that would be produced using this reproductive technique would be covered by these patents." The practices Monsanto wants to patent basically involve identifying genes that result in desirable traits in swine, breeding animals to achieve those traits, and using a specialized device to inseminate sows deeply in a way that uses less sperm than is typically required. REUTERS, August 10, 2005, "[Crop King Monsanto Seeks Pig-Breeding Patent Clout](#)," by Carey Gillam.

² At that point, a genetically uniform population of pigs is much more vulnerable to the new threat than a genetically diverse population would be. Narrowing the genetic purview of a population means amplifying the risk of serious losses to microbial or fungal attacks.

³ See GM WATCH at <http://www.gmwatch.org/archive2.asp?arcid=5728>:

The genetic engineer's garbage can: the U.S. food supply. When nearly 400 pigs used in U.S. bioengineering research apparently entered the food supply, the FDA said "it could not verify the researchers' claim [that the pigs weren't dangerous] because they failed to keep enough records..." (**US biotech researchers careless with 386 pigs - FDA**, full story below)

Here are some more missing GM pigs from the same report:

"One year ago, several genetically altered pigs ended up in Canadian poultry feed. Researchers at the University of Guelph in southern Ontario discovered 11 dead piglets were mistakenly sent to a rendering plant and ground into poultry feed."

The year before that we had:

"Tainted pork from genetically altered pigs stolen from the University of Florida showed up in sausage served at a funeral in High Springs, university police said.

The stolen pigs were genetically engineered to develop a disorder similar to diabetic blindness in humans. University officials do not know what effect, if any, the treated meat could have on people who eat it.

The pig incident is one in a series of missteps at the university's Animal Resources department which oversees the treatment of biomedical research animals." (**Tainted pigs show up in sausage at funeral**," The Associated Press, June 3, 2001)

Pigs themselves were also put at risk by a lab break-out a year later:

WASHINGTON -- Federal authorities are investigating the disappearance of genetically altered bacteria fatal to pigs that appear to have been stolen from a research laboratory at Michigan State University.

Investigators said that while the bacteria apparently are harmless to humans, they could devastate the pork industry if replicated and released, and they are treating the case as a potential terrorist threat.

"The roots of war are in the way we live our daily lives – the way we develop our industries, build up our society, and consume goods. We have to look deeply into the situation, and we will see the roots of war. We cannot just blame one side or the other. We have to transcend the tendency to take sides."

Thich Nhat Hanh, "Peace Is Every Step," Bantam Books, 1991

THE RENEWABLE WAR MACHINE

Sustainable-Destruction

Compiled by
Michael Kane

March 30, 2006 1000 PST – (FTW) - *In the face of Peak Oil, the military is preparing for energy insecurity and blackouts at their domestic installations by insulating themselves with renewable energy sources both on- and off-base.*

The following report consists of information compiled from government, public relations, and mainstream news reports with links to the original sources showing specific examples of the military's growing utilization of renewable energy. Italicized sections are FTW comments.

The semi-secret underground command center at Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado—where NORAD, NORTHCOM and USS-PACECOM headquarters are located—has six 1.75 MW diesel generators for backup power operating on regular diesel fuel. However, it is believed that renewable energy sources may be better than non-renewables for emergency backup reserves in addition to supplementing day-to-day consumption.

Led by the Air Force, the military has documented all renewable energy projects within 100 miles of their installations. The CIA has recently announced it will be moving its domestic division to Denver. Colorado is certain to see many "steel in the ground" renewable projects in the near term, especially within 100 miles of Cheyenne Mountain and Denver.

[Renewable Energy Conference in Fort Collins, Colorado](#)

Fort Collins is less than 70 miles from Denver.

US BioGen Building Ethanol Plant in Fort Meyers: Exploring Biodiesel

<http://www.fortmorgantimes.com/Stories/0,1413,164~8305~2987665,00.html>

Fort Myers is 80 miles from Denver. Ethanol/ diesel blends are being tested at military bases and biodiesel is also a suitable supplemental fuel for diesel engines and generators.

Colorado Testing Wind Potential in San Isabel

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story.jsessionid=aFQwVttvwwj8?id=35545>

San Isabel is 92 miles from Cheyenne Mountain. Tests have shown the area to be a class-5 wind resource, making it an outstanding location to install turbines.

Biomass Energy Grant Awarded to Colorado

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story?id=35524>

CIA Invests in No-Fuel Power Generators

<http://www.upi.com/NewsTrack/view.php?StoryID=20051018-111431-4825r>

RENEWABLE WAR MACHINE

http://www.acq.osd.mil/ie/irm/Energy/renew_energy/renewable.htm

The Department of Defense (DoD) created a Renewable Energy Assessment Team to explore solar, wind and geothermal energy resources at military installations.

Led by the U.S. Air Force, the team conducted on-site assessments at military bases in the Continental United States. The completed reports summarize the wind, solar, and geothermal resources identified at installations and surrounding regions (within ~100 miles).

Additionally, the team made recommendations on how to economically purchase renewable energy and encourage the growth of on-site energy development at select military bases. They have reviewed established and new technologies for collecting, storing, and transmitting renewable power.

Finally, the team defined the benefits and drawbacks of developing renewable resources, including reports on the efficiency, reliability, and vulnerability of the installation's energy systems and regional cost/reliability impacts.

DOD Renewable Energy Assessment – Final Report

http://www.acq.osd.mil/ie/irm/irm_library/Final%20Renewable%20Assessment%20Report.pdf

It was found that renewables have the potential to provide added energy security when the source of generation is on the installation. Renewables in close proximity and which can be dedicated to the installation, especially when teamed with existing diesel power sources, can also contribute to energy security, although electric lines transmitting this power to the installation could be at risk. **In some cases, where energy security needs are high, it could be more cost-effective to pay a slightly higher cost for renewable energy than to acquire more conventional alternatives.** [emphasis added]

...

(The DoD will) **encourage installations to evaluate renewable energy alternatives as part of contingency planning for grid outages.** Planning should be done regionally, include regional utilities and suppliers, and consider the use of the installation's renewable energy capacity as part of a local islanding strategy. [emphasis added]

ARMY ENERGY PROGRAM: Renewable Energy Projects

http://hqda-energypolicy.pnl.gov/programs/renewable_projects.asp

Army policy is to purchase Green Power—electricity generated from renewable energy sources when it is available. The Army continues to emphasize the use of passive solar designs, such as building orientation and window placement and sizing, in a variety of building types and new-facility construction. The Army anticipates more growth in the implementation of renewable energy and active solar technologies due to the recently implemented Sustainable Design and Development guidance. <http://www.hqda.army.mil/acsimweb/fd/linkssdd.htm>

The Army has entered into a contract with Washington Gas Energy Services to purchase 5 million kWh of wind power and 14 million kWh of landfill gas annually through December 2004. This purchase makes the Army a leader in the purchase of renewable power and assists the Army in achieving the goals of EO 13123 (.pdf, 80Kb) . The wind farm (located in West Virginia) will deliver 5 million kWh of renewable power annually to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Adelphi Labs, and Fort McNair. The Army will receive environmental credits for this purchase.

National Security to Lead Renewable Energy Deployment:
<http://renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story?id=19841>

In December of 2004, military and intelligence professionals endorsed renewable energy for "national security" at a conference in Washington D.C. sponsored by the American Council On Renewable Energy (ACORE). At this conference, former Director of Central Intelligence James Woolsey said that a main component of the "war on terror" is oil. This supports what FTW has always known to be true: the so-called "war on terror" is essentially a cover for resource wars.

When FTW first caught wind of this report, we published the following:

[Former US officials in the planning elites at defense and intelligence-related corporations are coming out in favor of renewable energy with fresh zeal. At a December conference of the American Council On Renewable Energy (ACORE), gradualist rhetoric yielded to crash-program urgency: "The conference was convened primarily to acknowledge that the past three decades of research and development in the U.S. have yielded positive results and that it's time to move into a new phase - a broad and deliberate deployment phase."

In other words, the energy problem is so critical at this moment that we must start using what we've got now, whether it's perfected or not: whether it is sustainable or not. If we don't, then we lose everything anyway. At least this will start buying us a little time.

After the debacle of Centcom's 2004 experience, the military is interested too -- not because energy independence will make it less necessary to kill and die, but because the war machine will be more flexible and enduring if they can run it on biodiesel.

We now have a growing list of elites who are personally moving to renewables and alt energy sources. This confirms Peak Oil in a whole new dimension: the people who have the power to respond to it on their own behalf are doing so, rapidly and with a dark new seriousness. – FTW]

Lokheed Martin Leads Boeing and SAIC into BIG SOLAR
<http://www.energylan.sandia.gov/sunlab/PDFs/asme2001-adds.pdf>

Boeing and SAIC have been working in partnership with Stirling Energy Systems (SES) on Advanced Dish Development Systems (ADDS), referred to as concentrating solar power or solar thermal. This project has been developed at Sandia National Laboratories, which is run by Lockheed Martin. According to Stirling's FAQ page, the ADDS technology is 20 years old, yet these systems are just now being brought to market for the first time. <http://www.stirlingenergy.com/faq.asp?Type=all>

The first commercial project to be installed of this kind will be 70 miles north of Los Angeles in the desert where an array of 20,000 dishes, over 4 square miles, will have the capacity to produce 500 MW of energy at peak output. This is not PV (photovoltaic) technology; it is entirely different. Solar thermal has the capacity to generate much more energy than PV at a lower cost. One has to wonder why this technology has been held back for two decades.

Department of Defense Funds \$53 M Solar Program

<http://renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story;jsessionid=aTWuvC49U5M9?id=38812>

The DARPA program calls upon the consortium (of solar producers) to develop and produce 1,000 Very High Efficiency Solar Cell (VHESC) prototypes that are affordable and that operate at efficiencies of at least 50%

Wind Turbines Operational At Guantanamo Bay Naval Base

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story?id=33704>

Ethanol Diesel Blend to be Tested at Military Bases

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story?id=34180>

National Guard Training Center Goes Solar

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story;jsessionid=aJxQmFtXV9jd?id=35491>

Cheyenne, Wyoming– Air Force Base Constructs Wind Turbines

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story;jsessionid=a73lffww-hChh?id=33227>

The Francis E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming is constructing two 900 kW wind turbines to supplement the base's power needs.

U.S. Army to Develop Wind Energy at Fort Bliss, Tx.

<http://www.awea.org/news/news100899fbl.html>

Camouflage Solar Panels

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story;jsessionid=aWNNH14gpzaGg?id=28183>

Konarka is developing portable, electric-generating buildings for the military.

Solar Powered Tents in the Military

<http://www.defensetech.org/archives/000989.html>

Iowa Thin Film Technologies develops flexible solar panels that can be made into army tents, sleeping bags and clothing.
<http://www.wired.com/news/technology/0,1282,64021,00.html>

Jean Hampel, project engineer in the Fabric Structures Group at the Army's Natick Soldier Systems Center (www.natick.army.mil),

said the need to reduce the Army's logistics footprint spurred interest in developing lightweight solar panels. "We want to cut back on the things that soldiers have to bring with them," including generators and personal battery packs, Hampel said. In modern warfare, portable power for communications technology is every bit as important as firepower and manpower.

Related links:

<http://www.powerfilmsolar.com/products/index.htm>
<http://www.iowathinfilm.com/>

Lightweight Solar Cells for Space and Defense

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story?id=35435>

United Solar Ovonic announced that the Air Force Research Laboratory (Kirtland AFB, NM) has awarded the company a \$6.7 million, 18-month contract to continue development of its ultra-lightweight, high-efficiency solar cell technology for use in space and airship vehicles addressing defense and homeland security applications.

Solar-powered Underwater Robots Unveiled

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story?id=38201>

The underwater vehicles have captured the attention of the U.S. Navy, which will evaluate their use for coastal surveillance applications.

AES Increases Wind Assets

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story?jsessionid=a4viNUCK54Sf?id=24726>

AES (Applied Energy Services) Corporation of Arlington, Virginia, owns 2,750 megawatts of wind generating capacity. They are a major energy support mechanism for the military. Many individuals on the AES board of directors have strong ties to the Pentagon.

AES Corporation Acquires SeaWest Holdings, Inc.

http://www.ewire.com/display.cfm/Wire_ID/2440

Through the acquisition of SeaWest, AES has become one of the leading developers and operators of wind farms in the U.S.

Army Calls Upon Army Corp of Engineers to Implement Sustainable Energy Development

<http://www.hqda.army.mil/acsimweb/fd/docs/SDD.PDF>

***Cape Wind Under Federal Control:** *The Cape Cod wind project is not under the control of the state of Massachusetts. Since it is located offshore, in federal waters, the project falls under the control of the Army Corp. of Engineers, who have just released a massive report on Peak Oil. Cape Wind (if completed) will be America's first offshore wind farm with a capacity to produce 420 MW of energy at peak output.*

U.S. Air Force Locks In to Renewable Energy

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/news/story?jsessionid=F971FDD976411FE3B1823A65FE723C35?id=44417>

The U.S. Air Force is the largest purchaser of renewable energy in the nation.

Energy and Security Group

<http://www.renewableenergyaccess.com/rea/market/business/view?cid=4341>

A small, woman-owned professional services company serving US military, other government, industry and international development agency clients in the US and overseas.

We focus on expanding the use of clean energy and environmental technologies and practices to enhance economic performance, promote energy security, improve quality of life, and advance resource sustainability.

U.S. Army-Hawaii gets national recognition for renewable energy efforts

<http://www.heco.com/CDA/default/0,1999,TCID%253D7%2526EmbedCID%253D4763%2526CCID%253D0%2526LCID%253D2940%2526CTYP%253DARTC,00.html>

The U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division (Light), Hawaii has received national recognition for initiating two major energy efficiency projects, including the largest individual solar water-heating project ever undertaken in the nation.

Killing Hope, Enlivening Options

by
Carolyn Baker

March 20, 2006 0800 PST (FTW) - **A**s Bush's poll ratings continue plummeting, as the stench of Washington's cesspool of corruption wafts across the nation, and as one courageous Senator, Russ Feingold, introduced censure of the President, I continue witnessing the [clueless left](#) clutching teddy bears and hoping that somehow, some way, the 2008 elections offer the promise of "taking back America," a phrase that I have come to loathe in the last five years as the nation sinks more blatantly and precariously into the quicksand of fascism. Although I have long ago said my good-byes to "hope," I cautiously embrace options, and in the following essay, I intend to clarify the difference between the two and enumerate a few of the options I have come to believe are available to those who clearly recognize that we are living in a fascist empire locked into the Terminal Triangle of Peak Oil, global climate change, and planetary economic meltdown.

For a number of reasons I perceive hope as detrimental to our sanity and survival. First, I have no interest in "taking back America" because the America to which most left-liberals refer when mouthing this empty slogan is not an America that I want back. I want no part of "lesser evils" and political parties that collude in the demise of the nation, the planet, and its inhabitants. As long as any of us "hopes" for the return of that America, we delude and infantilize ourselves, waiting like toddlers for the appearance of Santa Claus. Tragically, the plump, jolly St. Nicholas the left longs to have back is not a pal, but a predator who delivers economic, environmental, social, and spiritual devastation in packages with more appealing gift-wrap.

Living as I do near the U.S.-Mexican border, I was privileged for some years to teach in Mexico where I learned far more from my students who were university-educated professionals than they could have ever learned from me. They taught me much about their culture and their country's politics. In those days I believed in "lesser-evils" and found it difficult to understand the complete absence of hope among educated Mexicans for political change in their country. While I learned much about the depth of corruption in Mexico, its abject, merciless poverty, and the barbaric lengths to which its corrupt underworld of politicians and narco-traffickers were willing to go to maintain their power, what was most valuable was finally comprehending the attitude of my students toward all this—an attitude which was virtually devoid of hope. While their perspective may be labeled by some as "passive," I witnessed in awe their determination to create options in their personal worlds because they had come to fully understand the futility of trying to alter the big picture. Because they had no illusions, they had no hope, but they did have options.

The ruling elite of the United States and its corporate media in giddy complicity, have created an almost impenetrable illusion that this nation is a polar opposite of Mexico. When I cross the border, get stopped by a Mexican police officer making \$300 a month and slip him \$10 not to arrest me, confiscate my license, and impound my car, then return to the U.S. and tell my friends about it, heads shake and distressed expressions appear on faces, almost always followed by the words, "Those poor Mexican people; their nation is so corrupt." These days, when trying to explain the depths of corruption in the United States, I'm fond of saying that America is quite simply, Mexico with makeup. When American citizens thoroughly understand that, they will stop "hoping" and have more energy available for creating options. As Catherine Austin Fitts is fond of saying, we spent two years of time and energy trying to get a lesser-evil elected in 2004 when we could have been creating sustainable solutions instead of supporting yet another rigged election.

So when we've "gotten it," what options do we have? Bear with me if some of these suggestions sound too elementary. I'm laying out a process here:

1. First and most fundamental is the willingness to look at how ugly the situation really is. This is not unlike being willing to look at the extent of dysfunction in a family. In the family system, this may begin with feelings of discomfort, followed by thoughts that someone in the family may have a dirty little secret, followed by the awareness that that someone is an addict or alcoholic, followed by the realization that that someone was a child molester, followed by the awareness that that person may have molested many children. The journey from "feelings of discomfort" to the realization that one may have been sexually abused to the realization that it happened many times to oneself and one's siblings is a daunting, painful odyssey of hurt, rage, shame, and a plethora of other negative emotions. At any time in the process, one may choose to go "thus far and no farther," but then one is confronted with the reality that "thus far" is not the whole truth.

So it has been as I have discussed September 11, 2001 with hundreds of people. Quite often the response is, "I don't want to know the whole truth." That is always a prerogative to which one has every right, and it must be remembered that if one stops there, the remainder of reality always awaits revelation. Like the full disclosure of ugly secrets in dysfunctional families, owning and assimilating the abhorrent realities of our government is a process that requires a willingness to invest time and energy in developing one's learning curve,

not to mention extraordinary courage.

2. One of the most important things that awakened progressives can do is stop fearing and dreading talking about and dealing with money. For decades, I walked around quite pleased with myself because I only had what I needed and recoiled at words like "investment," "abundance," and "wealth". More recently, especially through the work of [Catherine Austin Fitts](#), I have come to understand that money, like a hammer, is simply a tool. The tool can be used to drive a nail, or it can be used to bludgeon someone to death.

One of the most important concepts activists need to understand is that [money is not the enemy](#) and that people who know a lot about money are not necessarily rich, greedy extortionists. In fact, they are natural [allies](#) for economic transformation.

An enormously important piece of this, of course, is eliminating personal debt, particularly in the light of the [2005 Bankruptcy Reform Laws](#).

3. Not only must we move through our fear of the topic of money, we must come to understand how it works in our communities. Until that is changed, the election of politicians to national office is a waste of time and energy because it is nothing more than the re-arrangement of deck chairs on a sinking ship. Again, thanks to the work of Catherine Austin Fitts, this reality has changed my focus and functioning as an activist. All genuine solutions are local. All others are props in the scenario of a crumbling empire.

4. We can continue to research and prepare for the realities of Peak Oil. We know that there is no combination of alternative energies that can be implemented on a national or planetary scale in time to avert a global energy crisis, but there is much we can do locally. Gaining much popularity across the nation is the [Local First](#) movement which focuses on purchasing from local businesses first, banking only with local banks, and networking with local farmers and food co-ops to create a sustainable food supply as Peak Oil impacts the price of food and other products. A stellar example of this trend is [Willits, California](#) whose population is overwhelmingly united in creating a sustainable future for its community. In addition, we can experiment locally with alternative energies and address other resource issues such as water and creating non-genetically modified seed banks.

5. We can invest in precious metals. Not everyone can afford to invest in gold, but almost everyone can invest in silver, and the sooner the better! An excellent source for silver is [The Money Changer](#) and for gold, [Goldline](#). During the Great Depression, there were over 200 local currencies in the U.S. Groups working locally on sustainability may also want to explore possible alternative currencies that would be feasible in their places.

6. Many individuals and families are relocating to areas of the country that are more amenable to building sustainability. There are no ironclad rules about this. Arable land, available firewood and water supply are important, as well as other factors such as severity of seasons and the presence of kindred spirits with whom to build community. In his article and book [The Long Emergency](#), James Howard Kuntsler offers some suggestions.

7. Sustainability cannot be created in isolation. Crucial in one's "options portfolio" is a sense of community. In my opinion, having the ideal location is less important than establishing a network of support with others who are journeying on the path of sustainable

options. (See [Community Is Necessary To Survival](#))

8. We must also prepare spiritually for the demise of Western civilization as we have known it. Whether or not one has a spiritual path, it is important to be able to make sense of and give meaning to the unprecedented and dizzying changes that the Terminal Triangle will present in the coming years. (Please see my article, [Navigating The Collapse Of Civilization: A Spiritual Map](#))

Paralleling the transformation of the community is the re-making of one's inner world. In fact, one will impact the other as Catherine Austin Fitts explains in her wonderful article [Coming Clean](#).

Recently a friend remarked that I seem more relaxed and less stressed. I replied that one reason might be that I have stopped trying to change the world and the country and am focusing more on changing myself and my community. Without thinking, the words, "I feel more hopeful than I have felt in years," came out of my mouth. Later as I reflected on my comment I realized that, for me, genuine hope is a byproduct of channeling my energy into sustainability on the local level—a cellular awareness that no government, politician, or political party can or will reverse the unprecedented, catastrophic challenges that human beings have created in the past five hundred years. Only we can do that, place by place, as, in community with each other, we enliven and expand our options.

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LEARNING TO LOCALIZE

by
Lindsay A. Gerken
Staff Writer



April 19, 2006 1300 PST (FTW) - WILLITS - Driving through dripping redwoods on a misty, rainy day reminded me why I came to the Regional Localization Networking Conference in Willits, Cali-

fornia on the weekend of April 7th through 9th. The redwoods have adapted to their local environment, resisting rot and decay that threatens other non-native plants, so that the hundreds of inches of rain and flooding that occur along the Northern California coast is a blessing to the redwood instead of a curse. If loggers come along and cut down the vertical grandeur of a redwood, the redwood fights back by budding another sapling straight from its stump. Learning about what conference attendees called "biomimickry," I recalled the redwood tree, with its mighty presence, fruitful existence, and custom adaptations to its surroundings. Standing in Willits with my entire body collapsed alongside a redwood that supported my weight with undeniable solidarity and the smell of wet bark, I realized that if the purpose of this conference was to learn how to localize our efforts; whether with currency, agriculture, or local business practices; then it was fitting that all attendees consistently had a forest full of reliable redwoods to act as teachers.

Over one hundred people met and networked with each other from various parts of the Pacific Northwest region, from as north as Vancouver, British Columbia to as south as Monterey Bay, near San Francisco. Considering that the goal of the conference was to establish networking relationships between attendees, the conference was a raving success. At the same time though, I would have liked to have heard more from the highly informational, spectacular speakers (some of whom weren't even originally on the conference schedule) such as Steve Heckerroth, Annette Riggs, and Julian Darley of the [Post Carbon Institute](#), and less of the theoretical visualizations of speakers such as the governmental representative from the Environmental Protection Agency.

On Friday night, Lanny Cotler, facilitator of the conference's sponsoring organization, Willits Economic Localization (WELL), introduced keynote speaker, David Schaller of the EPA. Before inviting Schaller to speak, Lanny asked the audience many hard questions about the future of natural resources, American society, and the human race. Calling those in the audience "bioneers," Lanny asserted the conference's underlying main idea: Peak Oil and the post-carbon era are upon us, and it's time to expand the movement to localize resources. Lanny rightly reminded the audience that the government and "technocracy" are not going to save us—we are the ones we've all been waiting for and the time to move is now. Emphasizing that the people rule and not the US markets, Lanny then asked Schaller to give the audience back some of its lost faith in the government.

Schaller's long power-point presentation called "Staring Down Scarcity" vaguely skirted around the intangible topic of viewing the natural world through lenses of either "scarcity or abundance." Sorting through the mire of Schaller's dimly-presented materials, I found some kernels of practical, tangible products and examples that *FTW* readers can use:

Citing companies with sustainable economic practices, Schaller mentioned a company from Great Britain that is using their local sheep's wool to create [Thermafleece](#), a natural and highly-effective building insulation that makes the risks of asbestos obsolete. Also mentioned were current innovations such as spray-on soy sealant for building projects, degradable [bioplastic ware](#) for sustainable picnicking, and [Oliod engines](#) for environmentally-safe water treatment.

Of particular interest to the beer-drinkers in the audience was the example of the [New Belgium Brewing Company](#) (known for their Fat Tire Amber Ale), which has created a way of operating that

they call "[Beer and Beyond](#)." The brewing company drastically reduced the amount of wastes it produces by powering their facilities with wind, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, building sustainably, recapturing and reusing waste water, and recycling waste products—such as using spent beer grain to feed cattle that in turn create manure that fertilizes soil to grow more grain. As the New Belgium Brewing Company found out, sustainable business practices not only benefit the Earth, but they also increase the company's profit margin. Simply by recapturing and reusing waste water, the brewing company uses only about four barrels of water to produce one barrel of beer, as opposed to the industry standard of using eight. In this way, the New Belgium Brewing Company spends about half as much money on water as do other breweries of comparable size.

Saturday's activities included several group break-out sessions wherein specific subjects were discussed and ideas were shot around the room like ricocheting brain bullets. Five total groups, placed together by region, first shared their "best practices" for economic localization. The group that this writer participated in encompassed people from Nevada County, Siskiyou County, Napa County, and Sonoma County. Some of the ideas expressed between representatives of these counties included: making asset maps of communities, including where waterways and gardens are located; conducting energy audits to determine the changes that can be made in specific areas to reduce energy usage; creating monthly community discussions on energy issues that are free to the public; holding events such as the "[Come Home to Eat Event](#)," sponsored by [A.P.P.L.E.](#) (Alliance for a Post-Petroleum Local Economy) to create a local food network; organizing "emergency preparedness" groups in order to introduce issues like Peak Oil and the need to localize resources; creating a member-owned energy co-op where shares are owned by community members; and of course, independent media such as *From The Wilderness* articles, the "[Peak Moment](#)" TV show by *Yuba Gals Independent Media*, or presentations to university students such as [Deborah Lindsay's](#) upcoming CSU, Monterey Bay lecture appropriately titled, "Peak Oil, Sex, and Why Gas Prices are going to Increase." From going around the group and hearing these and many other ideas expressed, it was obvious and encouraging to me that those in attendance at the WELL conference already have the localization ball rolling in their communities.



After lunch, another breakout session called "Global Café" ensued, with the goal of exploring creative ways to promote economic localization in our communities and regions. These groups were asked to shoot ideas out of their mouths like mushroom spores and to not judge or evaluate the ideas, but to list them quickly, whether they were practical or asinine. Groups changed members several times and yet the ideas continued to flow.

Some of the more practical notions expressed included: mass transportation, seed swapping, alternative currencies, labeling local and non-local products, providing local food for school lunches, using local banks, organizing carpools, and using local media and advertisements. A few of the more innovative suggestions included: cooperative canning, placing an import tax on out-of-town foods and products, solarized schools, rainwater catchment systems, community home building, "shop local first" campaigns, community "buy back" centers for not only recyclables but items like appliances and equipment, and my personal favorite as an alternative to turf-gangs—"garden gangs" of young people who gather to grow food and hang-out in their local community garden instead of at the mall. These ideas were then synthesized by the groups into a long list that will soon be compiled and available at the [WELL website](#). Though grouping attendees by region allowed networking to occur between local neighbors, I would have also liked to have seen attendees grouped by topic, so that the experts of each particular skill set could have also had a chance to brainstorm.

Following the "Global Café," Brian Weller of WELL conducted a session in the main conference room that illustrated the idea of "biomimikry." Using the way geese fly as an analogy, Brian told the audience how geese fly in a "V" shape in order to use the wind currents of each bird to their advantage. The lead goose must face the most wind resistance, and resistance is reduced further and further down the line of birds. When the lead bird gets tired, the geese switch places and uphold the "V" shape. If one bird drops away from the group from sickness or exhaustion, at least two other geese accompany the flailing goose to the ground, and stay with the ailing goose until death or re-departure, when they join up with another group of geese. Brian explained how this example is an analogy that can be applied to businesses and group work in general. Acting as a team, especially when one member is hurt or ill, allows the whole group to continue on their path. By taking-turns doing hard tasks, no one person gets "burned out" when completing the most difficult jobs. Like geese who honk loudly from behind to encourage the flock, positive feedback within organizations of people always adds more energy and efficiency to the group. Conference attendees were asked to consider other such examples of biomimickry, such as the way mushroom mycelia make underground networks that work symbiotically with soil and plants, or the way spiders stay in one area and collect local food resources.

Two of the most informative and intriguing guest speakers, Steve Heckerth and Annette Riggs, spoke for about ten minutes to a crowd of eager listeners in the main conference hall. By the end of his power-point presentation on solar energy called "Listening to the Earth," I was referring to Heckerth as "[Solar Steve](#)." Having been an activist since the seventies and having built solar and electric cars for decades, Steve had a very nonchalant and soothing way of showing that oil resources are depleting quickly while the sun shines everyday. Whereas Steve is keenly in-tune with the advantages and disadvantages of solar and electric transportation and power, he also has practical experience making not-so-perfect alternative technologies work like a charm. When Steve showed the audience some of the cars he's built, including an all-solar VW van (that took three days to charge) and an electric Porsche Spyder, they were awed by the decades of automobile innovations that Steve has worked on and built personally. Besides automobile innovations, Steve also shared incredibly intelligent ideas about how to build homes in order to use sunshine in the most effective way; such as building all roofs in a community as south-facing, solarized panels; or building communities with greenbelts through them to give an advantage to non-motorized bike riders. Steve writes [absorbing articles on his work](#), and is

hired often by various businesses to help them with their projects and practices.

Annette Riggs of the non-profit organization [Current Innovations](#) gave a speedy speech on complementary currencies and how they benefit local economies. Surprised at how much information Annette skillfully shoved into a five-minute period, I was impressed by both her uplifting attitude on localized currencies and the plethora of information she shared with the conference. Having worked extensively in the field of barter and exchange systems between large companies, Annette has first-hand experience with alternative currencies. Complementary currencies can be as simple as frequent flyer miles, or as complex as the 8 billion dollars of IRS-reported business-to business trade exchanges that occur in the US every year. Annette discussed how imperative it is to get local businesses involved *first* in any complementary currency program, so that a diverse directory of business “from A to Z” is accessible to community members who will still have a wide availability of goods and services to choose from. Explaining the ins and outs of complementary currency systems to the questioning audience, Annette fielded audience inquiries with intelligent responses from her highly economically-aware perspective. Considering that most conference discussions on localization ended up in the monetary realm, I would have appreciated the chance to hear much more from Annette on how complementary currencies promote sustainable local practices on a business basis.

Saturday evening was highlighted with a theatrical performance by the Willits Pickup Company called “Worm-Words.” A writhing group of worm-clad actors slithered in an ever-changing heap on the conference room stage, explaining their complex relationship with the soil and the farmer. Encouraging audience members to compost, the human-sized earthworms danced and sang “We are the worms, we make food!” as they passed flyers out to the audience. The bar of the [Brooktrails Lodge](#) was a popular place for conference attendees to indulge in local beer from the Ukiah Brewing Company or local wine from Frey Vineyards. An uber-talented pianist played song after song for those in the bar who wished to make requests and sing along. At one point, the entire bar sang in chorus the song “Ol’ Man River” from the musical *Showboat* as we drank spirits alongside Willits Creek. Those who did not adjourn to bed found heated spas to soak in that were surrounded by redwoods and Mendocino mists.

The main portion of Sunday’s final activities included a presentation from the Post-Carbon Institute, given by director Julian Darley and executive director Celine Rich. Founded on the goal of assisting societies through world energy depletion and helping them to localize, the Post-Carbon Institute maps over 85 localization efforts nationwide, and handfuls of international efforts. The newest expansion of their services includes the ability to create an organization’s own website using post-carbon’s templates. The ability to easily customize a website for any localization effort by going to the Post-Carbon Institute’s site has the advantage of creating a one-stop network of hundreds of localization groups. Julian Darley’s vivacious presentation of his organization was well received by conference members and had the purpose of answering the question: Where do we go from here and how do we stay in contact with so many groups? Though I would have much rather had the Post-Carbon Institute’s presentation take place earlier in the conference schedule (because by Sunday afternoon everyone was tired and ready to leave), their appearance tied the loose strings of the conference together by stating the one place where every conference attendee could find further information, networking, and resources.

The conference’s sponsoring organization, WELL, started by Dr. Jason Bradford of Willits, ended the conference with a long talk on innovation given by Brain Weller. Explaining the differences in thinking between innovators and traditionalists, Weller emphasized a key point to those of us in the audience interested in media and the presentation of localization efforts. Noting that it takes all types of people in a community to achieve progress, Weller asked the mostly-innovator audience to “be friends with your local traditionalists,” and to craft our messages with the audience of both traditionalists and activists in mind. I don’t believe there was a more important concept for localization progress than this key idea. If localization efforts are only heard about or accepted by those already participating in them, then new people and perspectives cannot enter the movement. When speaking to others about localization, let us remember that it takes all kinds of “movers and shakers” to accomplish large-scale goals, and leaving major decision-makers out of the process simply because they have different viewpoints will accomplish nothing. In other words, we cannot preach to the choir if it is the congregation we wish to reach. The congregation of this world is made up of such a mosaic of people that if our efforts are to be fruitful, we must craft our messages with *all* the people in our local area in mind, including those who have never heard of economic localization before or those who want to resist it. Once our messages are crafted to be more inclusive, new people from various corners of our communities will begin to listen and comprehend why localizing resources is essential to the future prosperity of every community.

Rapprochement?

Not Only Will the US Not Attack Iran, It Looks Like the Biggest Thaw in US/Iranian Relations Since 1979 is Suddenly and Inexplicably Underway

48 Hours That Changed the World – Oil Bourse Disappears; US-Iran OK Bi-Lateral Talks

by
Michael C. Ruppert

March 27, 2006 1330 PST (FTW) - ASHLAND — **M**arch 20 and 21st, 2006 may prove to be historic days. The Iranian Oil Bourse set to open on March 20th, selling oil in Euros, was quietly “delayed,” instantly reducing the number of mounting international threats to dollar viability. The only press story we could find anywhere on the delay made it sound like Iran had never planned to open a bourse in the first place, despite about two-dozen stories from around the world last year describing its pending debut. The next day Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei agreed to bi-lateral talks with the US over Iraq, opening the way for the first US-Iranian “state-level” talks since the fall of the Shah of Iran. The moves come at a time when it seems the belligerent rhetoric from both sides couldn’t be more intense.

What gives?

It is difficult to offer hard conclusions here, but there are a few significant tea leaves to read and some details of these developments that are worth looking at. In looking for a hypothetical construct that encompasses these enormous sea changes, the only two issues I have found thus far that make sense are the imminent onset of Peak Oil's first serious symptoms and the super-fragility of global financial markets. While these may or may not prove to be correct, analysis using them to construct a working hypothesis does yield good dividends.

First let's look at one other unusual story that appeared just before these two bombshells hit; It has some things in common with them.

On March 16th the Japanese news service Nikkei reported in a very small story that Japan was about to [slash its oil imports from Iran](#) in anticipation of US/Iranian hostilities or an "embargo." That story said that Japan would switch (as if that were an easy thing to do) to Saudi Arabia to make up for the 16% of Iranian imports it planned to cut in 2006. Japan gets about 14% of its total (6 million barrel per day) oil supply from Iran. Maybe the Japanese translation suffered a bit but the Nikkei story said that Japan was worried about an oil embargo against Iran.

Huh? Iran sells oil. It can't be embargoed. Nikkei might have meant "boycott" but that's an equally ludicrous notion. On this planet today there will never be an oil boycott against any seller. Any marginal spare capacity is gobbled up instantly in super-tight oil markets and there's no place else for the world to go to replace Iranian oil. Saudi Arabia has [yet to make good](#) on two-year-old promises to expand production from under 10 to 11 million barrels per day (Mbpd). Iran is producing 4 Mbpd so a conflict or serious interruption of supply from Iran is unthinkable. Saudi Arabia—almost universally held as the only producer even claiming to have spare capacity—could never make up *that* difference.

Every major producing nation except Saudi Arabia has already entered decline in terms of conventional oil production.

According to the Oil & Gas Journal, Saudi Arabia averaged around 9.4 Mbpd of production throughout 2005. Rough calculations show that Japan's proposed 2006 substitution of 16% of the oil it gets from Iran would equal only around 150,000 barrels per day. That would represent less than two per cent of Saudi Arabia's current daily output. Surely Saudi Arabia could do that much for Japan. Or could it? But then the question becomes which nations would voluntarily give up 150,000 bpd?

If pressed, of course, those nations would go to Iran to get what they didn't get from Saudi Arabia. That's a no-brainer. Otherwise the world would see large price spikes because there's no elasticity in the global supply stream. In 2005 we saw price spikes of three-to-five dollars a barrel a day when a single refinery in the US shut down for just a few days—and that was before Katrina and Rita.

In the escalating game of chicken with Iran, the Japanese announcement might have signaled to other nations that price spikes were coming even without open conflict. Iran's loss of one customer wouldn't even cause it to blink. There are plenty more out there waiting in line, most notably China and India.

While there may not be a connection between the Japanese announcement on the 15th and the sudden lessening of tensions on the 21st, all three events share one thing in common. What should have been headline stories, widely circulated, were all released in (as far as America and Iran are concerned) backwater outlets and they received no play anywhere else. They all involved the US and Iran. The timing of these events and the way they were announced dictates that we leave them on the table pending further investigation.

THE DISAPPEARING BOURSE AND A NOTE TO WILLIAM ENGBAHL

The story about Iran's International Oil Exchange (IOX), better known as the bourse, needs to be repeated here in totality. It was released by the Russian news agency, Novosti.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20060320/44575239.html>

World

*[Iran denies reports it will open euro oil exchange](#)
19:15 | 20/ 03/ 2006*

TEHRAN, March 20 (RIA Novosti) - Iran denied Monday media reports that it was to open a euro-based oil exchange.

"We have no information on opening an oil exchange in the free economic zone on Kish Island [southern Iran]," a spokesman for the Iranian Oil Ministry told RIA Novosti.

He said the ministry would have had been informed if the exchange had opened.

The spokesman said the exact date of the oil exchange opening on Kish Island was still unknown.

Some media reported Monday that oil would be traded exclusively in the European currency at the Iranian exchange.

Experts said the transition to euro from dollar in payments for oil could cause a default of the U.S. currency. All oil deals are currently made in dollars, allowing Washington to maintain permanent demand for the national currency.

Then the next day comes the following story. The source was the Chinese news service Xinhua.

March 21, 2006

[Qatar to establish Middle East's first international energy bourse](#)

Qatar will establish an international energy bourse, first of its kind in the Middle East region, the Qatar News Agency reported Tuesday.

Gulf Energy, a global consortium of energy consultants and investors, signed Tuesday with the Qatar Financial Center Regulatory Authority (QFCRA) a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the bourse, said the report.

The bourse is expected to be established as part of the Energy City project in Qatar, which is the first project to be carried out by the Gulf Energy.

According to the signed document, the QFCRA will be responsible for preparing the necessary procedures for organizational activities of the bourse, which will be specialized in the energy industry trade.

Qatari Minister of Economy and Commerce Sheikh Mohammed bin Ahmad bin Jassem Al-Thani was quoted as saying that the bourse is considered an important step with the country's plan to become one of the largest liquefied gas exporter by 2010.

Qatar also seeks to be a leading producer and exporter of oil products in order to meet the demands of the energy products and provide financial services

that would go in line with the high international standards, the minister added.

Gulf Energy said the project would "raise the global stakes of Middle East's energy sector, reshape the dynamics of its oil and gas business and expand its role in the management of resources."

Source: Xinhua

What's key to note is that the first story was released by a Russian wire and the second by a Chinese wire. We can assume then that whatever is going on, Russia and China are part of the deal. Although the story about Qatar didn't say it—Qatar is home to the US Central Command headquarters—there's little doubt that the Qatari bourse would/will be denominated in dollars.

Recently, journalist and author [William Engdahl](#) has written several pieces arguing that Iran's oil bourse was neither a threat to the dollar or a [casus belli](#) between the two countries. In making his arguments, he asserted that many folks like me who deemed the bourse a threat believed that by itself the IOX would suddenly collapse the dollar by triggering a massive run which would commence almost with the bourse's opening bell. That is not correct and his arguments miss the point I was trying to make.

But first let me thank Mr. Engdahl for correctly pointing out that a massive global shift to Euro-based oil pricing was impossible (for the time being) because European bond markets were nowhere near large enough to support a widespread global shift in reserve currency holdings. That's an important factor to watch but it does not, in my opinion, perfectly reflect the threat posed by the IOX. What if only a small shift in the global currency regime is enough to upset the global monetary applecart?

Rather than looking at the IOX as an anvil suddenly landing on the dollar's back, it should be looked at as a last straw. It is my assessment that Iran's oil bourse needed only a little activity to trigger a massive global shift away from dollars without widespread European bond support to sound the death knell for dollar hegemony.

A little crack in the dam is sometimes all that is needed to guarantee (or even cause) the dam's ultimate failure.

The key here is liquidity and the service of hundreds of trillions of dollars of derivatives held by major US banks like JP Morgan Chase and Citigroup. More moves—even in the smallest increments—away from the dollar might well trigger an immediate liquidity crisis that would start in the US and then collapse the entire global economy in short order. Derivatives are already under massive pressure and only a fresh supply of (stable) dollars can keep them from imploding.

That's one of the big motivators, I think, behind the Fed's decision to stop publishing M3 money-supply data this month.

It is clear to FTW that the US markets (especially the Dow and NASDAQ) are in a final pump-and-dump phase before a massive selloff and crash. We have republished recent stories suggesting that the [Plunge Protection Team](#) (PPT) is putting on its track shoes in preparation for another intervention à la 1987 and 2002. Of course, we are less than optimistic that the PPT's actions will prevent a major collapse for one reason above all else: Peak Oil. Declining energy dictates declining economies.

So, with regard to both oil and the dollar, we discern that it's not big shocks we need to be concerned about, but little ones. Those little shocks might be all that are required to bring the entire global system down.

Now let's look at Iran's "volte facé."

TALKING TO THE GREAT SATAN

Not since the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979 has Iran agreed to talk at a state level with the United States. The US has taken a corresponding position since then as well. At a time when media-pumped, hostile rhetoric has reached new levels, and when conservative think tanks are frantically shoveling propaganda about how the US might attack Iran over its alleged nuclear-weapons research, a March 21st announcement by Iran's Supreme Leader (with full authority over foreign affairs) the Ayatollah Khamenei has agreed to bilateral talks with the US over Iraq.

That development is a serious inconsistency (embarrassment) for all those screaming that an attack on Iran is imminent. It is also an embarrassment for the hard-line Ahmadinejad regime in Tehran.

[CNN reported](#) (original story by the AP) on March 21st:

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) -- Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Tuesday that he approves of proposed talks between U.S. and Iranian officials on Iraq, but warned that the United States must not try to "bully" Iran.

It was the first confirmation that Khamenei, who holds final say on all state matters in Iran, is in favor of the talks. His comments appeared aimed at calming criticism by hard-liners over a major shift in policy by the regime, which long shunned high-level contacts with a country Tehran brands "the Great Satan."

Khamenei spoke hours after U.S. President George W. Bush said he favors the talks. Bush said American officials would show Iran "what's right or wrong in their activities inside of Iraq."

Khamenei said that "if the Iranian officials can make the U.S. understand some issues about Iraq, there is no problem with the negotiations."

"But if the talks mean opening a venue for bullying and imposition by the deceitful party [the Americans], then it will be forbidden," he said in a nationally televised speech in the holy Shiite city of Mashhad in northeastern Iran.

Both the United States and Iran have said the talks will focus solely on stabilizing Iraq and not deal with the heated issue of Iran's nuclear program. No time or place has yet been set for talks, though the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, who is to head the U.S. side, has proposed holding them in Baghdad.

Last week, a top Iranian official -- Ali Larijani, the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council -- announced that Tehran was willing to enter talks with the United States...

On March 23, [The Indian Express](#), in examining these developments observed that they were "sending a somewhat mixed message to the international community." No kidding!

Mixed messages can be like lit matches to gasoline in places like Iran. With its population whipped to a frenzy as the result of the months-long escalation of tensions (largely framed along religious lines), Khamenei had to know that such a sea change would risk criticism at home. The Iranian press has shown a clear slant towards spinning public reaction in the desired direction.

Khamenei addressed these potential land mines [immediately](#). In a

story from Iran's Irib news agency on March 21 it was reported that:

Ayatollah Khamenei pointed to the impudent, distorted and improper attitude of American officials on the subject [of negotiation], adding that American officials both in and out of Iraq have repeatedly called on Iran to negotiate, and that these requests had fallen on deaf ears. However, as the calls were recently repeated once more, Iranian officials reconsidered the possibility that negotiation over Iraq might be effective for defusing the tragic insecurity there, and have agreed to transfer their views to the United States...

Referring to rumors from U.S. officials that Iran wants to negotiate with America on various issues, Ayatollah Khamenei said: "Recent behavior by American officials demonstrates their domineering tendencies, and that a negotiation is the same as summoning Iranian officials. We say to them that you are damned wrong if you think you are summoning Iranian officials."

Ayatollah Khamenei asserted that negotiations over Iraq are permissible, provided that the relevant officials can impress on the Americans Iran's views on the issue. But if this is meant to provide a venue for the deceitful Americans to continue their bullying, further negotiations with them on the Iraqi situation will be prohibited, just like they are on other issues.

A WORKING HYPOTHESIS

As I observed in [Crossing the Rubicon: The Decline of the American Empire at the End of the Age of Oil](#), an investigator's path from complete mystery to understanding is marked by the assemblage of facts and the construction of working hypotheses which are then constantly tested and refined in light of new facts until a degree of certainty is reached. The reason why an investigator formulates a working hypothesis in the first place is because it illuminates a path in the search for more evidence.

What can we conclude from these major but barely-noticed events?

Several things are given. First, both the US and Iran have adopted bellicose positions over decades and especially over the last year. Neither government can appear to be soft with the constituencies both have worked hard to inflame. Both America and Iran need their enemies. On the international front, neither can be viewed as waffling, lest both financial and military confidence, and trust from allies wane.

It is also inconceivable that other major powers like Japan, Russia and China would not have had input (if not outright influence) in these decisions. They hold the most dollars. Clearly, with the release of the bourse stories by Russia and China, their governments were in the loop and agreements were likely reached that these exclusive stories would not trigger massive media responses in either Iran or the US. It seems that all of the European press has also committed a sin of omission by not reporting these developments. I find it hard to believe that they would not have also noticed the shift.

Further, since the IOX was to have been (will be) Euro-denominated, the European Central Bank (ECB) had to have been watching (if not participating in) developments closely. The same is true for the world's ultimate monetary policeman, the Bank of International Settlements in Geneva. So Europe is strangely silent too.

Europe and Iran may still be planning for the bourse. Recently Syria switched its oil pricing from dollars to euros. And on March 24th, an announcement (posted elsewhere on this site) showed that the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia had just decided to convert

10% of their dollar holdings to Euros. This, incrementally, is how you prepare for a dollar collapse which, as we've written before, is inevitable. At the right moment it will be encouraged by US leaders including the Fed at the expense of American citizens. By dumping dollars slowly the biggest holders have time to get out before they become worthless. It is clear that now is not the right moment.

Let me add one more piece before attempting to sum this up.

It is becoming clearer on a daily basis that Saudi Arabia is approaching an imminent collapse of its major fields like Ghawar. Matt Simmons' work in *Twilight in the Desert* is being vindicated with every passing second. On March 24, professor and author [Michael Klare](#) published a [new article](#) suggesting in very concise terms that a Saudi production collapse is much closer than most experts admit. So, therefore, for both oil and the dollar, it is not a body blow that is feared, it is merely a slight bump. And were the bump to arrive it would be the entire planet that went down the tubes as the dominoes stated falling.

Peter Dale Scott once described the Vietnam War as sort of an ongoing crap game where players who were getting large payouts always stopped everything to protect the game. It is the game itself that is of ultimate importance. Players might come and go. Players might shoot each other. But the moment the entire game is threatened, all players will form a solid front to protect it from outsiders seeking to shut it down or change it, or from their own greedy actions. The "game" is self-policing.

So it is with global economic and energy paradigms. As much as enemies may dislike each other, both the US and Iran can see the risks involved of a confrontation. Lose-lose. Zero-Sum. Not only for the US and Iran, but for Russia and China as well. A global economic collapse is just as dangerous for all parties as a nuclear exchange.

Several years ago I wrote a story describing Mobil Oil's bribery of Kazakh government officials which also involved an [illegal oil swap through Iran](#). The swap had been made by an executive tied to Mobil which moved Caspian oil through an Iranian pipeline to Italy. Once in Italy, that oil was swapped for other oil which later reached the American markets. That swap was a felony criminal violation of sanctions imposed against Iran after the 1979 revolution. What it clearly showed was that energy needs, and the requirement to keep the game going trump all other concerns.

In Paris in 2003 I remarked to Ali Morteza Samsam Bakhtiari, a senior advisor to the National Iranian Oil Company, that I thought relations between the US and Iran might normalize within five years. That would be because a short pipeline connecting Kazakhstan and the Caspian to Iran's already existing network of pipelines would be a quick, necessary step to bypass construction of long, vulnerable, and expensive pipelines routes around Iran and too close to Russia and the instability in Chechnya, the Caucasus and the Balkans. Such a plug-in option would, in an age of ever-diminishing supplies, allow the US and the west to actually compete with China for even the limited amounts of heavy-sour Caspian oil that might come to be remembered as the last edible crumbs of global economic abundance.

It's very clear that all major world powers are scrambling to hold the whole planet together; a planet now more worried about bee stings than alligator bites.

If the US and Iran do wind up gradually normalizing or improving relations to the point of lifted sanctions over the next few years, remember where you heard it first.

Energy trumps everything, and on at least one small front, this is a sign that not all sanity and reason has left the world's ruling councils. But until we change the way money works, all that has been done is to slow down a train headed for a brick wall at the bottom of the long, steep, downward slope of Peak Oil.