

Rising Sun

Nomi Network Works to Help Human Trafficking Victims

By Supei Liu

There are 32 million people enslaved today.” “It is a 99 billion dollar industry” (Kara, 2012). When I first heard this statistic, it was hard for me to comprehend that slavery still exists in 21st century. So I set out to learn more about this issue.

I learned that slavery is an economic crime. The rising cost of natural resources combines with an increasing demand for goods and services to create economic opportunities for those who can get cheaper labor. Many of us have seen this type of inequitable situation in sweatshops in which women and children from developing countries and some

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Women Proutists
of North
America

January 2014

INSIDE:

Empowering
Women Leaders
Principles for a
Balanced Economy

Nomi Gives Me A Voice



Community-Driven Maternal Health Programs in Nigeria

By Dada Daneshananda

Since I was a child, I had dreamed about Africa. It was my grandfather's stories of Albert Schweitzer that first kindled my fascination. Finally in 2000, I got the opportunity. Over the next ten years, I lived in the villages in Ghana and Burkina Faso, coordinating Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT)'s community development projects. We focused on water and maternal health, embracing a development model that empha-

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Editor's Reflections: Our Voices Rising

By Mirra Price

On December 5th, Nelson Mandela, age 95, the revered South African anti-Apartheid icon, who spent 27 years in prison, died. He led South Africa from white minority rule to become his country's first black president. Mandela inspired a generation of activists, won the Nobel Peace prize and raised millions for humanitarian causes. In 1993, three years after he had been released from prison, I went to a speech he gave at the NAACP Convention in Indianapolis. I was awe-struck by his eloquence, dignity and sincerity.

Not only did Mandela, or Madiba, as he is called in South Africa, fight against the oppression of black Africans, but in his one term as South African President in the 1990s, he signed the CEDAW Treaty, an international treaty for the rights of women, which the United States has yet to do. He said, "Freedom cannot be achieved unless women are emancipated from all forms of oppression." I have been told that P. R. Sarkar, Prout's founder, had great admiration for Mandela. Sarkar said that until women are freed from oppression, society will be like a bird flying on only one wing.

In Dada Daneshananda's article about his inspiring maternal health project in Nigeria, he states that AMURT will not partner with communities unless women are given equal representation on the boards of the clinics they build. Nigerian First Lady, Patience Jonathon, is advocating the "35 % Representation" model in which at least 35 per cent of elected representatives are women. In contrast, in the United States, only 19% of all representatives of both houses of Congress are women (101 out of 535). In Europe, there has been an initiative to have at least 40% of all governing bodies to be women. Over 80 percent of Nigerian women are still victims of genital mutilation. Education and maternal prenatal health care, however, are slowly making a difference in this statistic.

In Satya Tanner's column, she raises questions about what it takes to change the workplace so it is more welcoming to the inclusion of increasing numbers of

women in leadership positions. Women still face a glass ceiling in the workplace. Why is that the United States, supposedly a progressive country with regards to women's rights, is lagging behind even some African countries in representation by women in government and in leadership positions in the workplace? I think the right-wing backlash led by tea party activists, accounts for part of the problem. In many states, women's rights to abortion and preventive health care are being eroded by passage of repressive legislation.



In Supei Liu's article on human trafficking, we are confronted by the alarming statistics that 32 million people are enslaved today and that trafficking is a 99 billion dollar industry. By creating jobs with fair wages and assisting victims of trafficking by giving these women a voice, Nomi Network is helping empower women to escape dismal futures caught in the web of human slavery.

Another aspect of the backlash against women is exemplified by the recent rape cases, in particular, the Steubenville rape case in which public officials and high school administrators were in collusion in many gang rape cases perpetrated by local football heroes. But there are also a lot of cases of woman as second-class citizens and much gender in-

equality that goes undetected to the untrained eye. For instance, there are noticeable differences when individuals have educated themselves on gender issues and opened their eyes to the biases that exist in our society. With a concerted effort to step outside limiting frames of reference, some people may notice a lot more about the issues than they may have in the past. For instance, the large amount of bias in our television shows, movies, commercials, internet communities, and news coverage, may become more apparent.

Whatever the arena, analysts cite various reasons why women's progress has stalled in recent years, starting with a backlash to the previous period of rapid social evolution. "Classically speaking, resistance to change comes at two points," Gloria Steinem, recent recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest U.S. civilian honor, explains. "The first is right in the beginning, when you break the rules and people say, 'No, women can't do that!' And the second comes when you

reach a critical mass, because then the dominant group thinks, 'Wait a minute!' Up until then, it hasn't seemed as if the other group might have great influence or, in the case of women, might actually outnumber them. We're now at the second stage of resistance."

Many of us sometimes find ourselves not taken seriously when we stand up against being treated as second-class citizens. The same leadership qualities of efficiency, competence, toughness, and outspokenness that are generally considered positive attributes in men may be considered as negative traits in women.

Women leaders are often summed up by hackneyed stereotypes such as "ice queen" and "single and lonely" and "over emotional". Since being businesslike and professional makes a woman an "ice queen", yet being warm and feminine makes her "over emotional" and, hence, untrustworthy as a leader, women are put into a double-bind, a no-win situation.

A few months ago, a male co-member of a committee accused me of being "single", and therefore, having less status and credibility than did he, who was married with a family. While this stereotyping and the example of attempted subordination, was shocking, even more shocking was the lack of reaction and response from others on the committee, including some women. Other women are often reluctant to come to the assistance of their sisters as it could put them in the same one-down position, by association with a woman who is being put down. And, tragically, sometimes women may not even recognize subordinating behavior since it is, unfortunately, quite prevalent, even pervasive in some progressive organizations. Why does it seem frightening to some men that women want to take our rightful, equal place beside men?

In Prout, we believe in coordinated cooperation, rather than subordinated cooperation. Many men do take supportive stances with regards to encouraging and supporting women in leadership positions. We need more men and women to step up to the plate and join the struggle for gender equality. It is time to shed the outworn oppression of patriarchy in which women are thought of as commodities to be sold to the highest bidder and in which women's chief role is to be supportive of men, taking a back seat to male dominance. Women must not stop until we are flying alongside men as that other wing of the bird. Only then will humanity move forward to create the world together we all want, in which all are free to develop ourselves to our highest potentials.

Women, we will rise!

Artwork by Jivadhara.

What is Prout?

PROUT is an acronym for the Progressive Utilization Theory which was propounded in 1959 by Indian philosopher Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. PROUT presents a viable alternative to the outmoded capitalist and communist socio-economic models. Neither of these theories has adequately met the needs of humanity.

Proutists are seeking to convey the comprehensive and visionary goals of PROUT theory, which combines the wisdom of spirituality, the struggle for self reliance and the spirit of economic democracy. As women who are Proutists, in this magazine, we are attempting to focus on the particular struggles that women face in attaining self reliance in society. However, we also wish to present the complete vision of Prout as a new ideology for a new world.

Toward the goal of being inclusive, we invite Proutists and others who are interested in providing a platform for social change to submit articles, letters to the editor, poetry, blogs, and other writings to Rising Sun. We want to take the pulse of the 99 percent and to try to reflect in some small way the voice of the people.

Key Principles of PROUT and Neo-Humanism

Neo-humanism expands the humanistic love for all human beings to include love and respect for all creation—plants, animals and even inanimate objects. Neo-humanism provides a theoretical base for creating a new era of ecological balance and planetary kinship.

Basic necessities guaranteed to all: In order to be able to actualize their highest aspirations, people need to have their basic needs met. Access to food, shelter, clothing, education and medical are fundamental human rights which must be guaranteed to all.

Balanced economy: Prout advocates regional self-reliance, cooperatively owned and managed businesses, local control of large scale key industries, and limits on the individual accumulation of wealth.

Women's Rights: Prout encourages the struggle against all forms of violence and exploitation used to suppress women. Prout's goal is coordinated cooperation, with equal rights between men and women.

Cultural Diversity: In the spirit of universal fellowship, Prout encourages the protection and cultivation of local culture, language, history and tradition.

World Government: Prout supports the creation of world government with a global constitution and common penal code.

Find out more about Women Proutists:

www.proutwomen.org

Or contact Mirra Price at 828-274-1683

womenproutists@gmail.com

Empowering Women Leaders

by Satya Tanner

Breaking the Glass Ceiling

A quick look at the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission statistics for 2012 shows us that white men still dominate executive positions in private industry and government in the United States (Job Patterns, n.d.). The disparity is often thought to be a result of 'inequality regimes', which are power structures and systems that favor one group over another. This is usually an unconscious by-product of a system that was established under a particular worldview.

For example, many organizations reward "face time" by promoting those who spend more time in the office working long hours. These organizational values privilege those without significant family or community responsibilities, typically single employees or men with housewives. This system of rewards originated from a worldview that values the 'traditional' model of family and responsibilities, where women take care of domestic matters and men take care of providing financially for the family. In such a model, men do not have to juggle their family responsibilities with their career demands in the same way that parents who need to pick up their children from child care might need to. Thus it is often said that many organizations are masculine and patriarchal because they value and reward behaviors that are consistent with a white patriarchal model of family. Meanwhile, without other interventions, a glass ceiling is placed on working parents, single parents, and others.

What can You do about Glass Ceilings?

No matter where you sit in an organization, the first step is to become aware of inequality regimes and who the privileged group is. The privileged find it hard to see their privilege, so this may be an uncomfortable exercise in self-awareness for some. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Is there diversity in the management team? Or do people promote people who are similar to themselves?
- What constitutes 'merit' in relation to who gets promoted or rewarded? Those who work long hours, or those with good productivity results, or those who contribute to a sense of well being in the organization, or something else?



- What groups are advantaged or disadvantaged based on organizational rewards?

Next you Need to Make the Case for Change

Your power and/or position within an organization will determine to what extent you can influence it. Either way, like any good change management project, a rallying vision, solid rational argument and educational approach is necessary. Arguments for breaking down glass ceilings include:

- Equal opportunity is the right thing to do.
- Greater diversity of thought leads to higher performing, more innovative teams.
- A diverse workforce attracts more market segments.
- Glass ceilings constrain the potential of an organization.

Finally, aside from external influences (such as legislative changes or reputation pressures), small consistent wins will get you where you need to go. There are typically a few broad categories of affirmative action policies whose aim is to restore the balance (Sheridan, 1998):

- Temperamental policies that aim to restore the "deficiencies" in a person's character or ability, e.g., teaching assertiveness skills to women. Though this may be in lieu of teaching cooperation skills to a hyper-masculinized management team, thus reinforcing an inequality regime.

- Role related policies that aim to restore any disadvantage attributed to a person's role, e.g., working parents and people of different cultural or religious affiliation may need access to flexible working arrangements for their community related responsibilities.

- Social/Structural policies that aim to remove discriminatory practices, e.g., transparent recruiting and promotion processes that remove unnecessary criteria and conform to equal opportunity legislation.

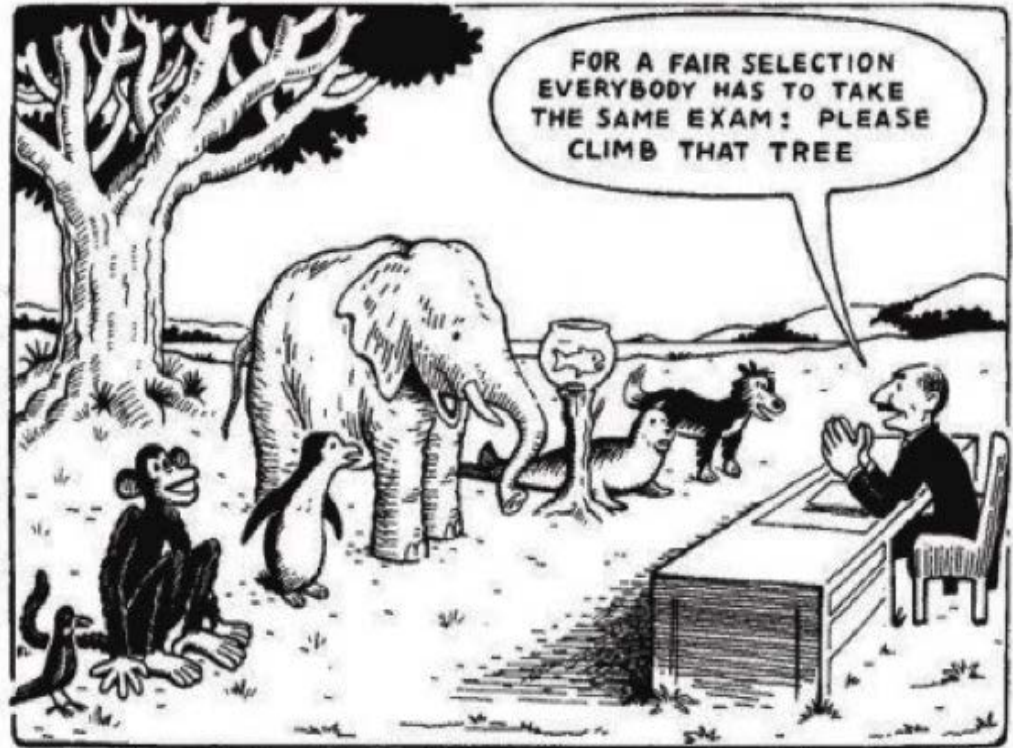
Thus, by identifying the inequality regimes in an organization, we begin our journey into removing glass ceilings. Organizational change is a tricky endeavor because making a case for change to a group that is privileged by the current system is a test of their magnanimity of mind. The current system is one, which despite years of equity and diversity advances, still shows a clear bias towards white men in the United States. Nonetheless, we must continue and accelerate the fight for fairness and equality for all, because above everything else, it's the right thing to do.

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Satya Tanner had a 16-year career as a pilot and aerospace engineer in the Royal Australian Air Force, leading people and managing projects. She has studied Prout at a post graduate level and has a passion for helping organizations and communities that are in search of innovation, leadership, healthy cultures and conscious business principles.



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New Prout Book Selections in Each Issue:

*In the next few issues, we will be featuring the new book, **Principles for a Balanced Economy** by Roar Bjonnes, which clearly explains the five principles of Prout. The book is based on Prout's founder, P.R. Sarkar's, 1961 Ananda Sutram.*

Principles for a Balanced Economy

By Roar Bjonnes

Chapter One—First Principle of Prout

“There should be no accumulation of wealth without the permission of society.”

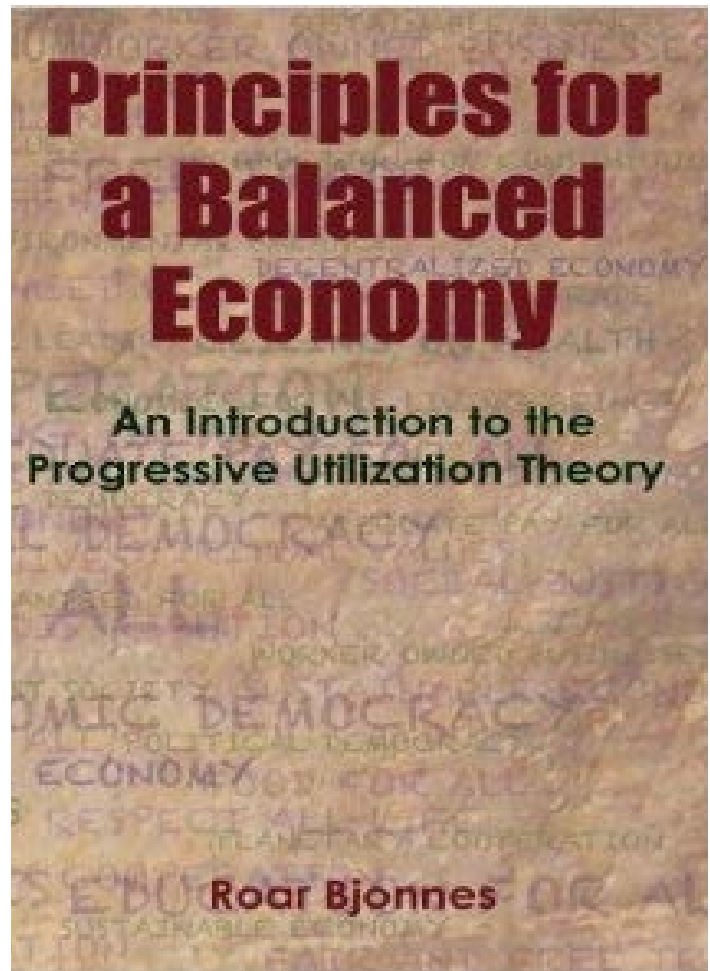
The Accumulation of Wealth

Wealth is commonly understood as material possessions or resources, or the control of such assets. An individual, community, region or country that possesses an abundance of goods or resources is thus known as wealthy.

The accumulation of wealth is both natural and necessary for individuals, businesses and society.

1. Individual: An individual accumulates physical wealth in order to provide for the physical, mental and spiritual needs for him or herself and the family.
2. Business: A business, whether a coop or a private enterprise, needs to generate capital for future investments in research, marketing and development.
3. Society: The state or local government needs to accumulate wealth to provide necessary public services and for a future “rainy day” in case natural calamities or war will strike.

While accumulation of wealth is natural and necessary for individuals and society, unrestrained accumulation of wealth leads to over-accumulation, which, in return, deprives others of their fair share of the world's limited material resources. Therefore, in order to be able to achieve the goal of providing a livable income to everyone, wealth accumulation, according to this first principle, will have to be regulated.



The Impact of Over-accumulation

Unrestricted accumulation of wealth is a major economic problem today. Economic growth and prosperity is linked to societies with a more even distribution of wealth and income, and an economy cannot prosper if consumers do not have sufficient purchasing capacity. While prosperity has increased in many countries, the vast majority of the world's population is still poor. Indeed, it is often argued by economists that some countries are rich and most countries are poor precisely because of economic exploitation in which rich countries and multinational corporations utilize the poor for cheap resources and labor.

There are other reasons for this enormous disparity, such as lack of education, internal disputes, racism, caste issues, lack of economic investments, etc., but the facts about economic disparity are clear: in countries such as India, with nearly one-sixth of the world's population, most wage earners make less than seven hundred dollars annually, which is nineteen times less than the poorest wage earners in the United States, who make about \$14,500 per year. In other poor countries, such as the Philippines, young women working on assembly lines for multinational corporations are considered to be “too old” at

the age of twenty-five and will lose their jobs to younger women eager to replace them. Such business practices cause tremendous hardship and economic instability for the poor, yet it increases the ability to accumulate more profit for the rich.

Economic disparity is not just a developing-world phenomenon, however, In 2010, two years after the global financial crisis, which left several million U.S. citizens unemployed and hundreds of thousands impoverished, businesses in the United States recorded in the highest rate of profits “since the government began keeping records more than sixty years ago” (Macaray, 2009). In other words, the trickle-down theory of capitalist economics has not benefitted everyone in society as its supporters claim. In the United States, the income of the rich has increased eighteen percent in the past thirty years, while the income of the middle classes has been reduced by twelve percent (Stieglitz, 2011).

Not surprisingly, there is a disproportionate use and distribution of the world’s natural resources. It is estimated that twenty percent of the world’s population uses eighty percent of the world’s resources, and the United States, with five percent of the world’s population, uses forty percent of the world’s resources.

That the concentration of wealth benefits the rich and goes against the poor is rather obvious. Even if we ignore the moral question of allowing a few people to get immensely rich while most people are poor, a more equitable distribution of wealth is actually a necessary condition for any healthy, working economy. Traditional capitalistic thought adapted from Adam Smith considers selfishness, even greed, as positive traits, and that if everyone pursues his or her selfish goals, society will on the whole benefit from such pursuits. This is the theory of the so-called “invisible hand” governing capitalist markets. This theory, however, makes unrealistic assumptions about the economy.

The Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stieglitz writes: “Recent advances in economic theory have shown that whenever information is imperfect and markets incomplete, which is to say always, and especially in developing countries, then the invisible hand works most imperfectly” (Stieglitz, 2011).

For markets to function there are five classical conditions:

1. First, information has to be complete.
2. Secondly, no player can be so big that any one alone can influence markets.
3. There can be no collusion between parties.
4. There can be no barriers to exit and entry.
5. There must be equal access to production technology.

Unless these five ideal conditions are met the “invisible hand” does not work. And since we do not live in such an ideal world, the concept of an invisible hand is not a realistic economic assumption.

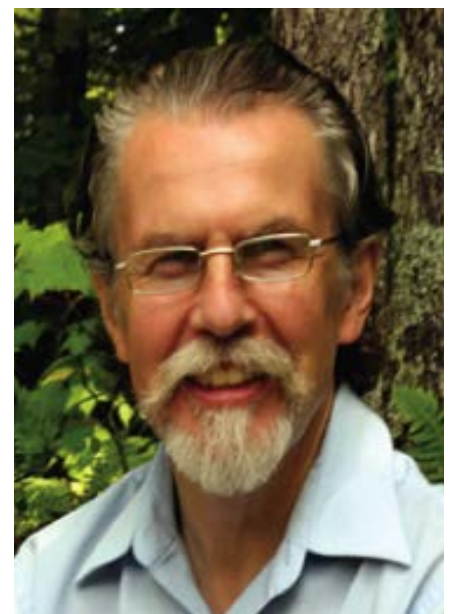
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Stieglitz, J. (2011, May) same article as above.

Roar Bjonnes is co-founder of the Prama Institute, a holistic retreat center in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. He is a certified yoga health educator, a popular yoga columnist and a lecturer on yoga philosophy and history. He has been a Proutist for several decades, giving Prout presentations in the U.S. and Europe.



Women Proutist Profile

Jody Wright

Jody Wright lives in Northampton, MA. She is a mother to five grown children and grandmother to three boys. As a parent educator, she works with families to help them learn infant massage, establish loving bonds with their children, and support breastfeeding, including the breastfeeding of adopted babies. She travels throughout the United States and the world teaching parent educators about infant massage, and helped found the International Association of Infant Massage in 1986.

Jody has been active in PROUT for many years, particularly in the area of publications. She has published PROUT newsletters and newspapers in Seattle, WA, Madison, WI, and New England.

Known as Didi Devanistha, she teaches personal meditation practices to individuals who want to enhance their spiritual growth. You can contact her at dididevanistha@gmail.com or go to mother2baby.com.

WOMEN PROUTISTS: What was your first contact with Women Proutists? PROUT?

I was visiting with my spiritual teacher in 1977 in India and he talked about the importance of providing everyone on the planet with the food and shelter that they needed to meet their personal and family needs in order to be able to pursue spiritual practices. He asked, "Unless you have food, how can you do meditation?"

I walked out of that visit determined to work for PROUT and help establish a society where everyone's basic needs are met and no one is allowed to accumulate so much wealth that others suffer.

WP: What drew you to PROUT/WP?

I attended my first large PROUT gathering in the summer of 1978 in Colorado. It was a very exciting week with others from across the US and I was inspired to work with others to establish PROUT concepts in our society.

WP: What PROUT projects have you participated in?

Mostly I have worked in the field of publications and newspapers. I have a background in graphic design and love to write.

WP: What is the most important target for WP?

Society is moving to a new understanding of economics, and our dependence on each other, along with the need to have a truly global understanding of the needs of our planet and of all society. But we are at a time of great upheaval around the world. PROUT's job is to use this moment of extreme pressure and

transition to help the world understand how we are all a part of one whole, and that we are really a very large family that cannot allow one individual or one group to control another or exploit resources for their own gain. P.R. Sarkar says: "In the interests of living beings as a whole, capitalism must come to an end."

I see this as essentially a spiritual concept – that we are all part of the One, which is generously backed by people's physical and

intellectual experience. Capitalism divides us, pits us against each other, and has no understanding of the whole.

At this point in time, society needs broad and universal thinkers who can see the big picture and guide society to ways of thinking and living that will preserve the planet, and support the growth and development of all.

WP: What do you see as a significant contribution Women Proutists can make to women in the world?

The needs of women and of families differ from those that many men, particularly in politics, emphasize. While we are all looking to create a more just world, women have particular insights and needs which Women Proutists can make sure are addressed as society changes. To me, this is our work.

WP: Thank you for your thoughts and participation in our work to create the world in which we want to live.



Jody Wright (far right) teaches infant massage instructors in a village in Ghana.

Living Revolts and Revolution Now

Jaya Brekke raises useful questions for activists working for socio-political change in a six-page overview of popular revolts presented at the July, 2013 Denmark Prout Convention. Three different types of revolts are examined:

1. **Anti-austerity demonstrations** against extreme political and economic policies that are wiping out people's social security across southern Europe. The author focuses on Greece, where she has spent considerable time studying the people's anger and how politicians and the media have tried to defuse it by creating false national scandals and then passing draconian laws and sending in the police to "clean up the crisis". She also briefly examines Slovenia and Bulgaria.

2. Demonstrations and clashes that are erupting in Turkey, Brazil and Chile, after a period of tremendous economic growth, due to **dissatisfaction with the quality of development and the quality of life.**

3. Revolutions across North Africa (Egypt, Libya, Syria) which began as **popular uprisings** but with more and more militarized factions, in some cases becoming civil wars.

She concludes by raising three questions:

1. What new social contract will replace the welfare state?

2. What does economic progress and quality of life mean today?

3. Will religion have a growing influence on politics, and what will be the consequences?

There are links to relevant articles about the revolts in Greece, Slovenia, Turkey and Brazil.

To read the complete article, please follow the link below.

<http://priven.org/living-revolts-and-revolutions-now-by-jaya-brekke/>



Recipe Corner

A regular column by Liina Laufer

I love to cook from scratch. I prefer simple, all natural ingredients, the fewer the better. I was raised on the sentient Margii diet, so I cook without onions, garlic, mushrooms, eggs, or meat. Check out my sentient recipes at recipessdeliina.wordpress.com.

Vegan Banana, Zucchini, Applesauce, or Pumpkin Bread

A delicious and easy bread (or rather cake, to be honest) for dessert, snacks, or breakfast. A great use for brown bananas or that zucchini that just won't stop growing.

Ingredients

- 3 ripe bananas OR 1½ cups grated zucchini, applesauce, grated apples or cooked pumpkin
- ¼ cup vegetable oil or butter
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- optional: 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 cup sugar or ½ cup honey
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- a dash of salt
- ½ cup chopped walnuts, pecans, or almonds
- ½ cup cranberries or raisins
- ½ cup shredded coconut

Mash ripe bananas or cooked pumpkin, or grate apples or zucchini and add oil, vanilla, and sugar or honey. Separately sift flour, salt and baking soda, add nuts, berries, and coconut, and then mix with wet ingredients; be careful not to overmix. Sprinkle some coconut on top. Pour batter in a greased loaf pan or cast iron and bake at 350°F for 45-60 minutes, until a toothpick/knife comes out clean. Let cool for 10 minutes in the pan, and then remove to cool and dry on a rack or wooden board before cutting. Great plain, or with butter or cream cheese for decadence!

Human Trafficking Victims

Continued from front cover.

this economic crime, I realized I had unconsciously participated in it. Some individuals took this exploitation to an extreme by forcing or deceiving vulnerable women and children, who often came from impoverished and uneducated communities, to enslave them for their own financial gain. In 2009, I made my first trip to Cambodia and encountered first-hand the impact this horrific crime had on some women and girls who have been sex trafficked, some as young as eight years old.

Nomi Network is inspired by a young Cambodian survivor, whose courage, friendship and smile sparked us to do something more to end this crime. Without economic empowerment, these women and girls will always be vulnerable. We set out to create jobs and other economic opportunities for survivors and women at risk of human trafficking. We started by partnering with local NGOs (Non Government Organization) in Phnom Penh by helping them to improve their technical business skills and to increase access to the market place for the products they produced.

In 2012, we started our own program in Bihar, India. We worked with women from the red light district and surrounding areas by teaching them technical skills as well as life skills, such as learning how to sew, how to write and to improve their hygiene. All of our participants, for the first time in their lives, opened savings accounts. Today, not only are these women earning money for themselves, they are keeping their children from exploitation and sending them to school. When I asked them, "What have you gained the most from working with Nomi?" They responded, "We never thought we could ever work in an environment like this one where there is mutual respect, friendship and community."

Today, through our product sales and training, we support 280 women in Cambodia and India. You can make a difference in someone's life today. Go to www.nominetwork.org and purchase the product made by these women or make a donation to support Nomi's training.



Reference: Kara, S. (2012). *Bonded labor: Tackling the system of slavery in South Asia & sex trafficking: Inside the business of modern slavery.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Supeil Liu, graduate of Penn State University and the Fashion Institute of Technology, has over 12 years experience in retail and wholesale industries as buyer, planner, and director. In 2005 while volunteering in Zambia, she saw a need to bridge the gap between local workers and western buyers, so workers could give a better future to their children. In 2009, she co-founded Nomi Network with Diana Mao and Alissa Moore. Today she spends most of her time working in communities in India and Cambodia. When in New York, she shares her experiences, encouraging others to make a difference in someone's life with simple changes and commitment.

Email us at:
womenproutists@gmail.com



Ananda Marga invites you to attend the Neohumanist Conference

Public day 14 April 2014 and Seminar from 15 - 18 April 2014
location: Prout Reserach Institute of Venezuela, Caracas



Neohumanist Education for Personal Development and Social Transformation

"Through adequate education and utilizing our capacity to discern, we can liberate ourselves from complexes and artificial distortions and expand our mind until we embrace with it the whole universe. This liberation and expansion of the mind converts us into responsible, benevolent, universalist and respectful human beings, indispensable conditions to create a healthy, ethic and progressive society."

P.R. Sarkar - Founder of Neohumanist Education

The hope is to bring together leading neohumanist and progressive educators from around the world as we delve deeper into the forces shaping the educational spaces of the future; join us to dialogue, listen, share and contribute towards forging new ways, fresh attitudes, greater awareness and practical modalities for improving educational practices.

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Jorge Enrique Sánchez
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María del Rosario Rojas
Professor of Ecology, Universidad Nacional de Colombia

Mcs. Nora Manrique, PhD
Puerto Ordaz, Venezuela

Dada Maheshvarananda
Director of PRIV, Caracas

Ole Brekke
Director, teacher, performer and writer at the Commedia School, Copenhagen, Denmark
more to be announced

Oregon Sisters' Retreat

By Nina Shapiro

Nine women from Oregon and Washington attended a sisters' retreat, held in rural Oregon October 11-13, 2013. The focus of the retreat was on spirituality and women's unity.

We had workshops on restorative yoga, chi gong, art therapy, a choir session, personal sharing and mutual support. The group also played cooperative games which helped create a spirit of unity. Woven throughout the retreat was group meditation with live music chanting beforehand (kiirtan). We ate organic vegetarian food that was mostly locally grown. By the end of the weekend there was a warm feeling of mutual caring, positive energy and spiritual renewal.

In January, 2014 some of the retreat attendees will be participating in a Women Prout Study Group at Kailash Eco-Village in Portland, Oregon. [Kudos to Oregon Women Proutists! (Ed.)]

Mission Statement

Women PROUTists are working together to create a world in which all people have the opportunity to develop their full potential. We educate and organize our communities to resist oppression, exploitation and discrimination. Women PROUTists support the all-round physical, economic, intellectual and spiritual development of women.

Come see our website:
www.proutwomen.org

Or Facebook us at:
Women Proutists of North America

Community-Driven Maternal Health Programs in Nigeria

Continued from front cover

sized sustainability. By 2010, when the opportunity came for AMURT to open up a new field in Nigeria, the Mafi-Zongo Water Project and the Mafi-Seva Community Clinic were ready to stand on their own.

Nigeria - A Troubled Giant at the Heart of Africa

Nigeria ranks eleventh in the world in maternal mortality with 630 deaths for every 100,000 births (World Health Organization) (CIA). AMURT decided to make maternal health our primary focus in Nigeria. A week of meeting government and international agencies in the capital, Abuja, revealed that the North of Nigeria gets most of the attention, leaving the South neglected. Florence, the chairperson of our newly registered AMURT Foundation, suggested we start in Ebonyi State.

Arriving in Ebonyi State

Ebonyi State was created in 1996. It is the poorest state in the South with a maternal mortality rate in 2010 of 1,000/100,000 as high as the worst areas in the North (Ebonyi state website, 2010.) Located in the country's Southeast, and populated by the Igbos, Ebonyi was part of Biafra, whose attempt at declaring independence in 1967 led to the Nigerian civil war that claimed millions of lives.

Building Partnerships to Meet Primary Healthcare Needs

In February 2010 when I arrived in Abakaliki, the Ebonyi state capital, I had no local experience, staff or organization, so I started by partnering with local (Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). I met with Partnership against Poverty, who in 2010 was close to completing, in partnership with the communities, the construction of three new health centers in Ekumenyi. AMURT agreed to furnish and equip the new health centers. By November 2010 new health centers in Gmelina, Ephuenyim and Offia Oji were up and running. The development model we chose demands that the projects must be initiated, owned and managed by the communities and that the government be part of the partnership, to provide staff and supervision.

In 2012 AMURT extended the project to Okpuitumo,



Ikwo, in the central area of the state. Local NGO, Neighborhood Initiative for Women's Advancement (NIWA), helped to introduce us to the new communities that had primary healthcare as their priority. By June, two more health centers, in Odeligbo and Elugwu Ettam, opened up following the same community-driven model.

Aside from primary healthcare, water is the most urgent need for many rural communities. Since AMURT Nigeria started with water and sanitation, first in partnership with NIWA, we have made 30 boreholes and trained WASHCOMs (Water Sanitation and Hygiene Committees) in 31 villages.

We start each new project area by conducting a baseline survey. The figures for maternal mortality in our new project areas in Ebonyi State were shocking. At 1600 deaths per 100,000 births it was double the national rate (AMURT Foundation, 2011). We verified the details of every maternal death for the last three years. It was an excruciating exercise. The record powerfully documents the grave predicament of mothers in the rural areas of Ebonyi State.

Harmful Traditional Practices Continuing to Affect the Lives of Women

Access to primary healthcare is only one of many challenges that rural women in Ebonyi State have to face. Many harmful cultural practices and traditions are slow to loosen the grip they have held for centuries, keeping women socially, economically and sexually subordinated.

Authorities have long outlawed the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM); still the practice continues

in many rural communities. Upheld for so many generations, this horrible practice can't be eradicated overnight. Mere legislation, without community sensitization and education, is neither understood nor accepted. Often the communities feel their cultural identity, the ways of their grandfathers and grandmothers, to be under assault and, so they resist. Things are changing gradually, but according to the last national health survey in 2008, 82.6 % of Ebonyi women are circumcised (Nigeria National Demographic Survey, 2008).

In Igbo society, the man has to pay dowry or bride price to his wife's family. This is still very much in effect in the rural areas. In some areas the man is expected to pay the equivalent of the market price for one cow. Consequently, the man feels his wife to be his property, because he paid for her! Whatever the wife owns was traditionally considered to be the property of the husband. Women find it difficult to get ownership of farms, buildings and land.

Traditionally, when a man dies, the brothers will claim the right to his properties, leaving nothing for the widow. If she has no male child, her situation becomes desperate as she and her daughters have no claim. Earlier the brother could even claim to inherit the wife. The justification for this was to give support to the shelterless widow.

Many of the traditional rulers accept only men in their cabinet. Women have their own associations and organizations. Now Nigeria's First Lady, Patience Jonathan, is aggressively pursuing the "35 % Representation" plan to put women in public office. AMURT and other NGOs, make women's equal representation on management committees and WASHCOMs mandatory and a precondition for our engagement. With increased exposure to modern society, all these harmful traditions are fading slowly and irreversibly. However, in the isolated and remote rural areas, where AMURT works, this process is far behind. Most women still find themselves held back and suppressed by these old traditions.

Winning the Confidence of the Communities

Putting up a clinic building may seem as THE main work in meeting the primary healthcare. But without follow up, we'll be left with empty shells--white elephants. The remote communities are not used to modern healthcare. They have had little exposure and very limited access, relying on herbalists and traditional birth attendants (TBAs), many of whom are quite capable. However, TBAs are often unable to manage complications during birth. Nigeria's continu-

ing high mortality rates among mothers and newborns testify to the need for improved maternal health services.

In Ebonyi, very few rural government health centers have the confidence of the people. To address this challenge, AMURT recruited unemployed health workers and volunteers from the local communities. Their sacrifice and hard work has been the key to the success of the health centers.

So that no Woman be Forgotten or Neglected....

To save lives and to touch all women who need these programs, AMURT adopted a UNICEF-designed program called Community Based Home Care for Mothers and Newborns. We trained 30 health workers in our project areas to make home visits to every pregnant woman. During the visits, warning signs and high risk cases can be identified early. The mothers are encouraged to come for prenatal care and to give birth at the health center. A direct personal connection between the health center and the mothers is created. The result has been a steadily increasing attendance on prenatal days and increased number of births at the health centers.

The health centers now offer all the services for mothers recommended by the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) on prenatal care days. A medical doctor is present on every prenatal day. An ultrasound machine is available for screening on indication. Every clinic has a small laboratory that can conduct necessary blood and urine tests. Every woman is tested for HIV, and PMTCT care (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission) is available for those who test positive. All the women are given tetanus shots, intermittent preventive treatment for malaria, along with other nutritional supplements. We have distributed Long Lasting Insecticide-treated Nets to the pregnant women for protection against malaria.

The number of women giving birth at the health centers is increasing gradually. We recently passed 1,000 births in the AMURT-assisted health centers. The health centers are equipped with all lifesaving drugs and anti-shock garments for women who suffer serious postpartum hemorrhage. We have ambubags and oxygen concentrators for resuscitation of newborns with breathing difficulties. The birth rooms are well equipped to monitor labor and manage complications that may threaten the lives of the mother and baby.

All the health centers have staff on duty 24/7 without fail. The health workers deserve to be comfortable

during night shifts and weekends and holidays. To this end, AMURT has constructed, together with the communities, staff quarters and boreholes that provide steady running water.

When complications arise that require interventions beyond the capacity of the health centers, such as emergency caesarian section, well-equipped ambulances rush mothers to the tertiary hospital in Abakaliki, the state capital.

To assist poor families and save lives, AMURT manages an emergency medical fund to help pay for expenses during the first hours of an emergency to prevent loss of life due to lack of funds.

The Way Forward

Sustainability and empowerment are very difficult to achieve. AMURT needs to carry health workers, communities and government along if we are to achieve real community development. We need to be careful to avoid the trap of dependency. The fall in maternal mortality and rise in patronage at the five health centers speak clearly about the advances we have made. Our efforts continue with government advocacy and training of health workers and community health education programs. We have started outreach programs in two more remote rural communities with the intention to establish more health centers. Many more areas have applied.

Ebonyi State is a small state in a big country on a vast continent, where thousands of communities are still deprived of basic healthcare services. We have a great opportunity; indeed we are privileged to be part of this work. With more support we will be able to empower more people, inspire greater change and most crucially, and continue to save precious lives. For more information, you may use this contact information: Email: nigeria@amurt.net Web: www.nigeria.amurt.net Facebook: 'AMURT West Africa'

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Welfare or Earthshare? *Continued from back cover*

capacity; eliminating taxes on buildings would encourage construction and maintenance. What to tax instead? Significantly increasing the tax rate on land value discourages land speculation and gives a strong stimulus for these landsites to be put to good use for housing and other productive needs. Natural resource taxes function as user fees and ensure fair and efficient use of God's gift to all.

Thomas Paine urged this approach to tax policy when he said: "Men did not make the earth... It is the value of the improvement only, and not the earth itself, that is individual property... Every proprietor owes to the community a ground rent for the land which he holds."

Pennsylvania has been pioneering this reform and currently 16 cities have shifted their tax base in this direction. Mayor Stephen Reed of Harrisburg has stated that "a land value taxation system...is an important incentive for the highest and best use of land." Over 90% of the property owners in the City of Harrisburg pay less with this approach to local taxation. In 1982 there were more than 4200 vacant structures in this city of 53,000 residents. Today there are less than 500 vacant structures. Between 1982 and 1993 there were more than 4,700 residents employed. In 1980 only 16% of city residents had incomes over \$25,000, but by 1990 that had increased to 41%. Harrisburg, formerly the second most distressed city in the United States, now is one of the highest quality of life cities on a number of economic indicators. Clearly, there is every reason to suspect that this reform would also work wonders in the City of Philadelphia. It should be fully implemented as soon as possible.

The other way to secure democratic rights to the earth is this: Land could be made available to individuals and groups who wish to live in ecologically sustainable villages and farms. Community land trusts can hold title to such lands while the buildings and other improvements can be privately owned. With land access, involuntary unemployment would be ended since the right to use land is the essential prerequisite to the right to work. Money available through non-profit grants and government transfer payments can be used as revolving funds for micro-loans for the purchase of building materials for the new eco-villages.

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My Summer at the Caracas Prout Research Institute

By Barley Colello

I spent this past summer in Caracas, Venezuela with Dada Maheshvarananda, director of the Prout Research Institute. Despite the commonly held world view of Caracas as being a bustling, traffic-filled, and violent capital city, the Prout Research Institute of Venezuela

(PRIVEN) is a peaceful oasis. It has a view of the mountains in one direction, a very large barrio in another, and the skyscrapers and apartment buildings of the city in another.



This past summer there were eight of us living and working in the Prout House, ranging from seven to 60 years old, and from the various countries in Latin America and the United States. I appreciated the unique and authentic international traveling experience I received by living and working alongside native Latin Americans.

I tried to focus my time learning about Prout, cooking healthy lunches, and developing a garden plot in the back yard. I also spent time at the sister organic agriculture project called Centro Madre (Master Unit) with another Dada (yogic monk) and Didi (yogic nun), working on various projects on the property. I value the experience I had living with Dada and practicing yoga and meditation with him. I am excited for Dada's work in Venezuela as I was able to experience first-hand some of the initiatives Venezuela is taking to becoming a successful socialist state. I see Prout as something that could potentially help move Venezuela forward to a better functioning economic state. Overall, my experience in Venezuela was inspiring, thought-provoking, and educational. I even got to eat a couple (hundred) mangos!

Illumination

By Jyoti Wind

The heart of a woman,
Plied with strains of compassion
Like the strings of a harp,
Becomes the music of the spheres.

Light pulses and radiates,
Her cells fill,
Her heart lifts,
And heaven's door
Opens.

All that is possible
In the human form,
Emanates from her thoughts,
Divinity shows itself
In her face.

The rise of the feminine
Mirrors the need
Of our own evolution.
In filling you, woman,
There is illumination!



Welfare or Earthshare? That is the Question.

By Alanna Hartzok

Despite our rhetoric of individual freedom, increasing numbers of us are being frustrated and thwarted from lack of security in the necessities that are basic to sustain life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. One out of four children under age six is now being reared in poverty. For some time now it has taken two full-time workers to sustain the modest middle class standard of living that could be procured by just one full-time worker twenty years ago. The incapacity of wages to keep up, makes the cost of housing and other necessities a greater burden each year.

Gains in automation and production, advances in education and training, all have been nullified by the steadily increasing cost of what no one has ever manufactured -- land and natural resources. Our treatment of the earth as a market commodity, just like a car or television, is the basic flaw in our economic ground rules. Treating the earth as simply a capital line item is the root cause of the ever-widening gap between those who have too much and those who have too little.

The earth itself is the bottom line. The land is the source of all life and wealth. To survive, we must have somewhere to stand and to rest.

But this absolute necessity for our very existence is nowhere guaranteed in our constitutional laws. Our Bill of Rights did not proclaim the human right to the earth. The failure to found democracy on the fundamental human right to the earth is the crack in the Liberty Bell.

One of the greatest wastes of natural and social resources is that of poorly utilized urban land sites upon which sit boarded-up buildings while inner city homelessness increases everywhere. For instance, in Philadelphia today there are an estimated 27,000

abandoned properties and at least 24,000 homeless people. What is preventing people from access to these land sites?

The United States has now surpassed the former Soviet Union in the proportion of its population in prison. Over five million people are incarcerated, waiting for trial, on probation, or on parole. We have become so inured to criminality that rural counties call prison construction "economic development."

All of these problems -- homelessness, unemployment, boarded-up buildings, deteriorating neighborhoods, increased incarceration -- are outcomes of the most fundamental flaw in democratic institutions. The human right to the earth has been denied.



Alanna Hartzok is the co-director of Earth Rights Institute and the author of The Earth Belongs to Everyone.

The fundamental human right which we now need to affirm is this:

There are two practical ways that we can democratize land rights. One is fundamental tax reform. Shifting taxes off of labor would increase purchasing

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