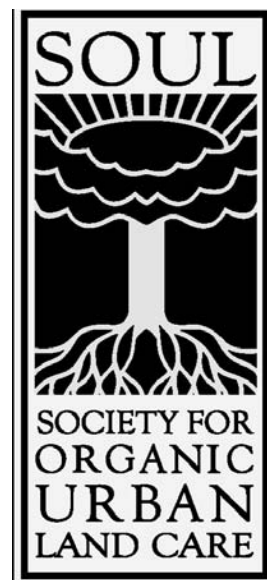


Organic Land Care *with*

**"To search for solutions to hunger
means to act within the principle that the status of a citizen
surpasses that of a mere consumer."
CITY OF BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL**

**Light tomorrow with today!
-Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1851)**



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Our Mission:

"To support our communities in their transition to organic practices"

This newsletter is distributed free of charge to all SOUL members. Please feel free to share this publication.

SOUL

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March 2009

Welcome to almost spring time where you live. Spring seems to be taking its time to get here this year although the light is lasting longer these days.

During the past month, I have thought about change and the need to focus on this but in a positive and reframed way. I was at a presentation on educational change and the name Dr. Wangari Maathai was introduced. Dr. Maathai began the Greenbelt movement which is both an environmental movement as well as a "women's civil society organization." In her country of Kenya, she saw soil erosion and other forms of environmental degradation taking place through non-sustainable forestry practices. She wanted to create a better way of harvesting firewood while at the same creating a sustainable supply of fuel wood for rural African women. Working with other local women in 1977, they planted perhaps 10 trees of which only 2 survived. Through perseverance, dedication, commitment and a vision for what could be in the future, the movement that she founded has now planted 40 million trees across Africa and has given woman an opportunity to become stewards of the land as well as addressing the social issues confronting women in Africa. For this change to have happened, a "trickle-up theory" occurred instead of the traditional "trickle-down" concept for which we are familiar. This poignant example reminded me that change occurs at a local level and then spreads. Certainly, this is not new information, but perhaps it is information that we forget when we hear of what is happening globally.

Hearing and then reading her story and what she went through to create a solution to a serious problem was instructive. Looking at her inspiration pointed to the importance of positive reframing of what is transpiring around us. What was inspiring about this idea of change was that it pointed to what people can do when they are focused on a change. Again, this is not new information. What was important to be reminded about was that change can happen and that this change can come from the bottom up, the grassroots, the "trickle-up theory." It seems everywhere we turn we are being bombarded by negativity, but it is essential to remember that we can all make a difference if we work together.

But to be positive in the face of change will take confidence, perseverance and commitment. Thus far we in SOUL have embraced this idea.

In this newsletter two examples of positive change are highlighted. One is about a Brazilian City that Ended Hunger and the other about students coming together for environmental change. I hope that you enjoy this issue as I wish that you see the positive in the changes around you.

David Greig

The City that Ended Hunger

By Frances Moore Lappé

YES! Magazine, via Common Dreams, March 13, 2009

Straight to the Source

Full story: <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2009/03/13-9>

In his article "The City that Ended Hunger" Frances Moore Lappe (author of *Diet for A Small Planet*) states that "hunger is not caused by a scarcity of food but a scarcity of democracy." These are profound words in which he articulates this idea about Belo, Brazil, that has a population of 2.5 million of whom 11% were living in abject poverty with "20 percent of its population going hungry."

Lappe introduces the reader to the concept of 'Participatory Budgeting', which has spread across Brazil since starting in the 1970's. In Belo, the right-to-food vision coupled with participatory budgeting has been operation since 1993.

The city created opportunity for dozens of innovations to evolve to assure everyone's right-to-food by bringing together the interests of farmers and consumers. One such innovation was to offer farmers choice spots where they could sell their products directly to the urban consumer and effectively "redistributing retail markups." This was a win-win situation for farmers because the middle person was taken out of the equation while the poor would get fresher, healthier food at reasonable prices. As well as these farm market stands, local "ABC" markets sprang up in high traffic areas. These ABC markets, of which there are now 34, sell 20 selected healthy items from the local region at 2/3rds of its normal cost. Anything else that is sold would be at market price. These markets are regulated by the city but to be able to use these specific areas, the ABC sellers on the weekends must take their produce outside of the city centre to poor neighbourhoods so that this cheaper but healthy food can be sold in these areas. To keep the markets honest and at prices that people can afford, the local university researches the costs of 45 food items from around the city. From this research, they identify where the best prices can be found and post these results at bus stops, in the paper and on the radio and TV.

Another innovative aspect of Belo's "food-as-a-right commitment is the *Restaurante Popular* -People's Restaurants. These restaurants, of which there are three, use locally grown produce to provide meals for more than 12,000 people daily. At a price of 50 cents for a meal this provides good food at an affordable price. The meals are provided for everyone although 85 percent of the people that frequent the restaurants are poor. Because there is a mixing of different socio-economic classes, the meals "erases stigma and allows "food with dignity" for the cities poor.

Additionally, the city's move to create, design and implement a new food system, "extensive community and school gardens" and nutrition classes are used to foster the continuation and participation in this food system. Through these innovative, municipal practices, Belo is able to feed their hungry, working to eliminate childhood malnutrition while providing ethical economic opportunities for its citizens. [Truly, a positive change through the coming together of people!, Editor's comment.]

The 60's are Back: Students March for Environmental Change

By Nancy Cole

The Mustang Daily (Cal Poly), March 3, 2009

Straight to the Source

Full story: <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2009/03/03-11>

In her article, Nancy Cole talks about the 60's protest movement as a time when young people were fed up with the status quo. This dissatisfaction took the form of civil disobedience and protest to express their views. As she states, "young people raised their voices and refused to be an accomplice to what they believed to be wrong."

What has changed since the 60's is that instead of a relatively small number of radicalized youth at that time, the protests has now reached across disciplines to find solutions to the moral, environmental and economic uncertainty of our time.

Cole talked about the coming together of thousands of students in Washington, D.C. at an event called *Power Shift 2009*. This gathering was a chance for these youth to come together to participate in workshops, lectures and panels that "frame the way we perceive the world, connect us to quality people and create a community around our efforts." The efforts being referred to were such things as "environmental justice, to the nation's energy policy, to transportation." More importantly, the *Power Shift* conference was a chance for these students to come together at a summit and then bring back to their campuses the energy received at this event because "it is time to identify a new vision for our community, our state and our nation." As Cole states, the youth of America must stand up because "it is our generation that must uphold a moral compass and create a vision for our shared future. Sometimes, we must stand up and speak out against the engine that drives our challenges."

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SOUL Calendar
for upcoming events**

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