

[from the personal to the political: an exciting new book by feminist warrior Judy Rebick]

and various struggles elsewhere. Like in the case of the Brazilian *MST* or the Landless Peasants Movement. Or, in another case, like in the example of truly sensitive leadership to the needs of the poorest citizens, like in the case of Venezuela.

Clinics, in Venezuela, are constructed in the most impoverished districts. Also schools, co-op farms, and housing. These new leaders work very hard to educate and organize its members. When necessary to engage these larger frames of reference, like the political struggles, the people confront the powerful, wealthy and corrupt business interests and corrupt government officials with political tactics which include nonviolent blockades, protest marches and other strategies.

Another indicator of the spiritual nature of many of these social movements around the world is the strong feeling of *Ubuntu* that is beginning to be felt among many of the members in these various organizations. *Ubuntu* means that "I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper." It means that one is not okay, nor does one have his or her needs met until all the others in the community first have their needs met. That one's brother and sister come first. *Ubuntu*.

In the spirit of *Ubuntu*, in part, is the spirit of participatory democracy as an answer to the failings of representative democracy. With participatory democracy, inclusion is the focus, not simply the rule of the majority over the minority like in a recent Canadian federal election campaign. In Rebick's U.K. example, the lowest classes and the poorest in society fully participate, not bow down to the middle class rules or sentiments, nor are they subservient to the wishes of the powerful and wealthy. Organizers in the U.K. brought together some of the most needy and impoverished of peoples. Disabled workers, street people, welfare clients, poor people from a variety of experiences and a host of factors were introduced to participatory democracy.

The concept was and is truly remarkable. Organizers flex their muscle in the larger society by, among other things, raising cash. This is done by hosting raves, also convincing welfare recipients to donate the homeless portion of their monthly cheque if they are

successful homeless welfare candidates in the system. The organizers hold squats in abandoned buildings as one strategy with respect to housing and homeless issues. And the cash raised from raves and from clients' cheques helps pay for additional housing needs and also jobs creation.

Also the cash requirements of the organization, in terms of its needs in terms of day to day functioning is also raised in this way. The motivating energy here is simply impatience, believe it or not. These time tested veteran political street organizers are simply too tired to wait for things to happen, too tired to wait for government to sit up, take notice and finally do something concrete to help the neediest people in society.

What these U.K. organizers have learned the hard way, is even the most well intentioned political parties get bogged down when they are elected. Even the most hard core leftist political parties. And so, they fail to deliver for a number of reasons, like distraction, diversion, bowing to pressure from powerful corporate lobby groups, also powerful government protocols, etc. And then there are the problems of co-optation, and then also trying to look good in the representative assemblies, or parliaments etc. Of course another huge problem is that once in power, the elected focus on getting elected again. And again. With polling and political maneuvering to keep their base and associated voters on side.

So in England and elsewhere around the world, people are turning to social movements in order to access new and successful forms of political expression. The internet is another form of communications that people turn to. But there are also exceptions in the Global South.

In the Global South, in some areas, impoverished people try to have their voice heard through the election of political parties, which promises to be sensitive to their issues. Social movement organizers carefully utilize political parties as a means to an end. The idea is to use political parties as a method, in a way, to bring people together, and encourage them to vent, as well as consolidate their efforts at organizing.

Among other things, this is to help facilitate the people's demands for an end

to political corruption, and an answer from influential business and government executives and officials regarding their stolen land and their stolen resources. So here again, inclusion, the spiritual and the theories of nonviolence meet the realities regarding some of these examples of participatory democracy and also political organizing in general.

Another exciting and mostly unknown development in the Middle East regarding spiritual politics is the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). These teams practice a very specific form of noncooperative, non-violence to bring together peaceful and largely workable approaches involving Jews in Israel with Muslims in Palestine. These efforts are truly awe-inspiring. The stories of peaceful conflict resolution that are located right in the fragile nexus of potentially hugely violent events involving the police and military has a unique and particular spiritual essence. The CPT member looks directly into the eyes of the potentially violent person they are confronting and tells

them: "I see the presence of God in you!" Unbelievably this works! Even when confronting the most brutal thugs.

And also the recent example of the Nova Scotian dispute involving natives and whites regarding the lobster fishery is awe inspiring and spiritually instructive. It is still one more element in an evolving world of political and social change. Still one more story of a truly transforming power emerging onto the global landscape. Anyhow, the groups were at each others' throats.

There was nothing but much animosity and hatred between them. Also they were at a dead end in their efforts at negotiation and compromise, regarding the fishery. What happened next is truly transforming and, I guess, miraculous. The First Nations leadership suggested a possible way out of the quagmire.

They brought up the idea of a talking circle. Representatives from the whites and the natives sat in a meeting, that was arranged in a circle, and began speaking to one another. It was organized in such a way

so that only one member of the circle spoke at a time. After awhile, something magical slowly started to take place. The talk gradually evolved into each speaker's personal stories and revelations, and thus the talk began to deepen and become more personally emotional and also spiritual.

The meeting went on and on way longer than anyone could have imagined, for many hours, going deeper and deeper into this profound exercise at personal probing and healing, which was what eventually was starting to happen. After a very long time, the meeting slowly concluded. Everyone rose and hugged each other in a deep feeling of trust and respect.

The members of the circle were transformed, even transfixed with this feeling of unity and even a bit of *Ubuntu*, or so it would seem. Then they realized that they had work to do. So they sat down once again and resolved the lobster dispute in a few short minutes. Some of the consequent aftermath of this dramatic talking circle experience included cross cultural projects that encouraged cross cultural

sensitivity between and among the fishing community and also the introduction of a community based fishery. This was also another example by Rebick of a very practical and incredible story of spiritual politics in action.

Finally Rebick also wrote about some of the work done in terms of the social economy part of the social movement phenomenon. She discovered that the social economy functions firstly, in that it serves the community and its members. It does *not* serve profit. Secondly, it is independent of government. Thirdly, it practices democratic processes by participatory democracy. It works at decision making by getting all members of the organization involved in order to create its rules and laws. Inclusion is the order of the day, every day. Fourthly, it distributes revenues and cash surpluses to the members first. It does not distribute cash to capital nor to corporations. Finally this social economy is based upon participation, inclusion, empowering individuals and collective responsibility.

3 different items

I suppose you all are wondering why I had titled this article, 3 different items. Well it is because I have three different items I want to talk about in this issue of Street Feat. #1 – I want to make reference to the fact that I was in attendance at the hearings which was talked about on page 5 in Vol.12, issue2. #2 – I would like to provide an update on how working on my business is going. #3 – I want to congratulate Darrel Dexter for getting in as our new premier, which all the Street Feat is happy about. (*Editor's Note: Street Feat has no political affiliation and columnist's opinions are their own and not necessarily those of the paper*).

While in attendance at those hearings, I had learned that they are pushing for a national strategy to end poverty. I think it is about time because after all where we live in the country of Canada, there is no excuse for stuff like people being homeless, people going

for days without having anything to eat, etc. Also there are people out there who can't work because of their disabilities or mental health issues. Sometimes I wonder if governments even think of those facts when they make policies like who is entitled to benefits like Social Assistance or not. Maybe if governments did take those facts into consideration, then maybe you would see less people out on the streets doing activities such as panhandling. Something I had learned over the past couple of years is that different provinces have different policies for how they run Social Assistance, like in Ontario they make you give up all assets to go on the system. Here in Nova Scotia they make you give up some assets to go on the system. I think there should be one system for all Canadians. This is basically what was talked at these meetings. Well that concludes the second paragraph of my article.

As for an update on

how my business is going, I want to let all the regular readers of Street Feat know that I am no longer working on the original idea which I had talked about in past issues of Street Feat. This idea is the one regarding my idea about wanting to get something going for Persons with Cross Disabilities, which I had talked about in past issues. Through being a member of EDN, I had eventually come to the conclusion that this business may not be viable. Also I had gotten too much of a run-around while I was trying to find out how I could get a business like going. So instead I have been working on myself published postcards which I have a total of 5 stores selling them for me, and plan to expand my market. I have a professional portfolio made to use as part of my marketing plan. This will provide me with a professional way to present them to different stores, and to see if these stores are interested in selling them. Also over



**by Kendall Worth
Vendor and Editorial
Contributor**

the summer months, I will be down at the waterfront a couple of times a week selling my handmade postcards. I do have a vendors licence from the city for that. Also I am working on other ideas, which includes an opportunity for local handcrafters to market their items. This includes a catalogue to be published within the next year. Watch for more details.

I want to end my article with a congratulatory note, congratulating Darrel Dexter for his success in the last election. I have every confidence that the NDP party will keep most of their promises. Some of the NDP, MLA's have always had been big supporters of our paper.