

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy---February 2002

...Boycotted for years by the main newspapers, radio stations, and television networks, the Participatory Budgeting [process] has itself become a popular media form.

—Sérgio Baierle, director of CIDADE, a Porto Alegre, Brazil, NGO

BCA CHAPTER NEWS

Chapter Calendar

(Continued on page 8)

The Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy's next meeting will be on **Wednesday, February 20**, from 7:00 to 9:15 p.m. at **Cambridge Friends Meeting**, 5 Longfellow Park (9 min. walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.)

- ① Hear and discuss report-back from **World Social Forum** in Porto Alegre, Brazil, with **Dave Lewit**.
- ② Prepare for Bill Moyers' esposo of **NAFTA's "Chapter 11."** Learn about Canada's Mondev Co. suing US over **Boston's sovereignty**.
- ③ Prep for BCA's **elections and Five Year Planning**, in March.

— Bring food, and friends! --

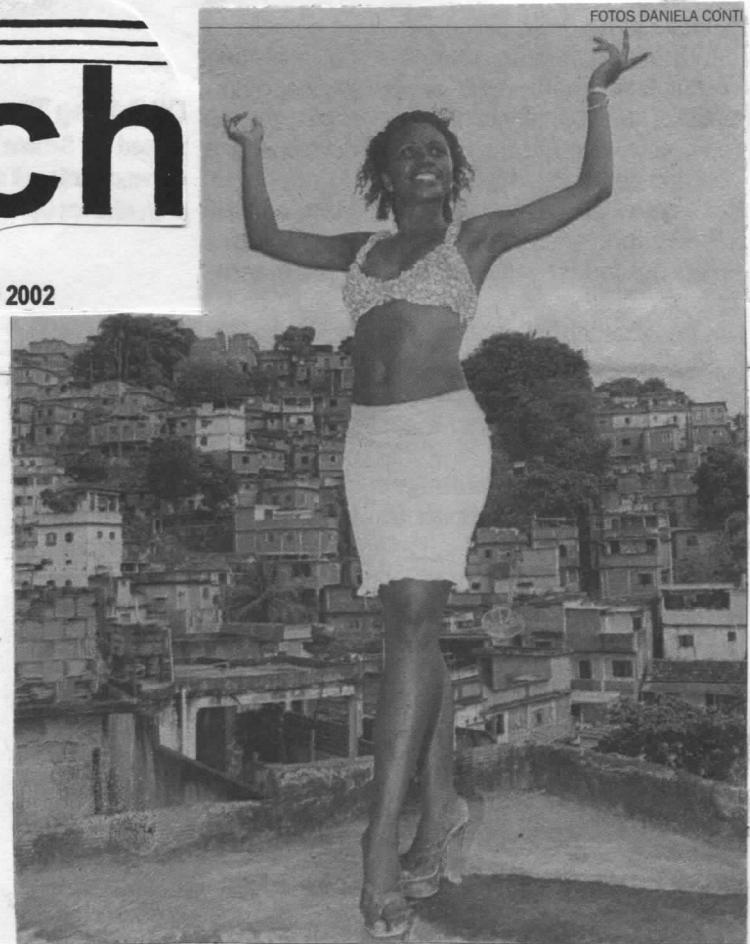
Why a War on Terrorism?

BCA's January meeting featured **Herb Kelman** of Harvard University in a discussion of "the metaphor of war". He stressed three things about the war-not-justice response of the Bush administration to the September 11 terrorist attacks. First, the US was "set" for military rather than police response-- and "war" would preclude a political response to Mideast problems. Second, the unilateral initiative of "war" may encourage India to act unilaterally in conflict with Pakistan. Third, a "war" atmosphere might inhibit efforts to speak out or to understand Islam and terrorism or to invoke multilateral international agreements.

One may infer that 1950s McCarthy-like conditions would favor shifting resources to the military and toward corporate/imperial pursuits. **BCA members and friends** raised many points:

- * US support for Israel, with its exploitation and humiliation of Palestinian Moslems, as a goad to terrorism.
- * [Absence of leadership for] democratic world government, where an International Court of Justice would spur a criminal rather than military response. Where is the UN Security Council in all this?
- * talk with friends-- media make it seem foolish to ask what people really think-- pluralistic ignorance
- * wear antiwar button-- pierce delusional system -- action vs. rhetoric
- * globalize from below-- redefine "we" and "US national interests"
- * fly Earth Day flag on Martin Luther King Day-- try www.sojo.org
- * "exceptionalism"--Americans are spoiled
- * television-- "war on America" persists-- remedy corp/media war hype
- * resolve Islamics' grievances-- start by listening
- * beware struggles for water access
- * develop alternative energy-- photovoltaics
- * "subversion by agreement"

(Alliance News continued on Page 8 >>)



Favela queen Claudiene. In the face of unemployment, a chance to be Rio's Samba Queen.

—Special thanks to MA Rep Antonio

Cabral (D-New Bedford) for translating the accompanying article from Rio's *O Dia*.

LOCALIZATION

"Another World Is Possible"

Notes on World Social Forum II, Porto Alegre, Brazil with a focus on Participatory Budgeting

by **Dave Lewit**

Half of Rio de Janeiro's six million people live in favelas--beehive slums of around 10,000 souls each, clinging to unstable mountainsides or flood-prone industrial margins, illegal for home ownership, bypassed regarding normal health, education, sewerage, police, fire, and other services. But by the grace of God or by earlier immigration of Italian anarchists and German socialists, there are few favelas in Porto Alegre, 800 miles to the south.

The site of the Feb 1-4 World Social Forum II, Porto Alegre has a Workers' Party (PT) mayor and a participatory city budgeting (PB) system now 12 years old. More than 50,000 citizens--poor and middle class, women and men, leftist and centrist--attend fortnightly or weekly meetings to identify local needs, understand city complexities and methods, set standards, prioritize projects, draft local plans, elect delegates to deliberative councils, monitor councils and city agencies, and reconsider rules and conditions in the next year. The official city council cannot disrespect or veto the decisions of the citizen councils. The mayor can veto, but never has.

The results have been solidly positive without being miraculous or without critics. Poorer districts catch up with street paving, health

facilities, public housing, and so on—improving residents' lives while upgrading the value of properties held there by landlords from richer districts. Corruption has disappeared. Children participate in their schools.

Over 100 other cities including São Paulo, Brazil's largest city, have picked up on participatory budgeting. Even whole states have adopted participatory budgeting, involving 320,000 citizens in Rio Grande do Sul alone. Now Porto Alegre is going beyond budgeting and instituting participatory city planning—for land use and large investments.

In the US we have representative democracy—more or less. But as one Kerala (India) observer said at the World Social Forum, democracy is not a political system but a culture. Given actual or potential conditions in the United States, is large-scale participatory democracy possible here too?

Before we get to that huge question, what was the World Social Forum (WSF) like?

This was the second annual World Social Forum. The first was held in Porto Alegre last January–February to coincide with the elite World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland. It was to demonstrate to the world that “another world is possible” besides the

“Investment and Society” (CAIS). I hope someone pulls together all of WSF’s alternative working and proposed models of institutional forms. Then we will have beacons for making our way out of the megacorporate swamp. But I think many who attended will now find themselves glued to the computer searching the names in the program for important material they could not possibly have heard at WSF because dozens of meetings were happening simultaneously.

Next year’s WSF will again meet in Porto Alegre. After that they’re talking about India.

What topics did the conference cover?

Here are the “plenary” offerings (seven simultaneously on any given morning). Feb 1: International Trade, Transnational Corporations, Financial Capital Control, External Debt, Labor, Economy in Solidarity, Africa/Brazil. Feb 2: Knowledge-Copyrights-Patents, Medicines-Health-AIDS, Sustainable Environment, Water-Common Good, Indigenous Peoples, Cities-Urban Population, Food Security. Feb 3: Combating Discrimination & Intolerance, Democratizing Communications and the Media, Cultural Production-Diversity-Identity, Global Movement of Civil Society, Culture of Violence-Domestic Violence, Migrations-People Traffic-Refugees, Education. Feb 4: International Organizations & Power-World Architecture, Participatory Democracy, Sovereignty-Nation-State, Globalization and Militarism, Principles and Values, Human Rights-Economic, Social & Cultural.

I’m very sorry that I didn’t get to two programs honoring Brazilian/ World cultural liberators—Paolo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) and Agostin Boal (*Theater of the Oppressed*).

Who, for example, gave a major address?

Local TV in Porto Alegre advertised Noam Chomsky as a public event. Since all plenary addresses and panels supplied participants with translation earphones, thousands of people packed three giant

halls. Chomsky was scheduled for Sala 2 at the University Center, so that’s where I went. Almost an hour late, Chomsky’s simulcast image appeared on two giant screens in the hall. Hundreds of people stood up and shouted their disappointment in unison, scolding with their right index fingers. Chomsky had been given the microphone in Sala 3, reserved for delegates with badges. Half the audience in Sala 2 left, many to sit on the floor in the exhibition hall where the Portuguese simultaneous translation came over a loudspeaker. It was vintage Chomsky, great for first-timers but old-hat for me, so I also left. Also among the scores of English-speaking presenters were such notables as Hilary Wainwright, Susan George, Kevin Danaher, Lori Wallach, Michael Albert, Walden Bello, Martin Kohr, Jeff Cohen, Trevor Gwane, RVG Menon, and others.

All of the Portuguese speakers were new to me. Notable was Portugal’s Boaventura de Souza Santos, who forcefully elaborated fifteen theses of participatory democracy. One point was about “demodiversity,” analogous to “bio-diversity.” Others included Sérgio Baeirão of CIDADE in Porto Alegre who emphasized that PB is now at a “thermidorian moment.” The growth of the Workers Party (PT) is strong, but with PB success many PT participants are calling to



This billboard in Porto Alegre, set by Consolidated Union of Workers (CUT), says “Neoliberalism is continuous production. In Brazil 30,000 children die annually before the age of 5. Another world is possible.”

top-down corporate world offered by IMF, World Bank, WTO, and the US Treasury Department. It was organized by the French organization ATTAC (the group promoting a Tobin Tax on international speculative money transactions) and the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) of Brazil in coalition with landless and other Brazilian groups critical of neoliberalism (free trade). Two thousand participants were expected and 12,000 showed up. This year 20,000 were expected and 80,000 from South America, Europe, South and Southeast Asia, North America, and some from elsewhere actually registered. Meanwhile, the WEF moved its proceedings to New York (see article by John MacArthur, this issue).

WSF scheduled 800-900 speeches, panels, seminars, and workshops over four days, mostly at the Pontifical Catholic University a few miles from downtown. I chose to focus on participatory democracy and participatory budgeting in particular. This is an institutional form. We already have the AfD-proposed model “A Common Agreement on

enlarge PT presence in the city bureaucracy, which could weaken the drive of an autonomous PT in pressing to enlarge its civic policy power.

☞ What's happening in Brazil that could affect democracy?

Brazil is a huge and diverse country. The rich/poor divide is bigger than ever, IMF/WB's privatization, deregulation and related world financial crises have undermined the economy, and forest-burning is an ecological disaster. Shopkeepers in Rio de Janeiro hired "pistoleros" to murder homeless street-children. Brazil groaned under a 20-year military dictatorship into the 1980s. Since then unions and leftist parties have gained in numbers and their principal national candidate "Lula" da Silva of the PT won pluralities in three presidential elections, but was defeated by center and right coalitions in the runoffs. One fifth of Brazilians are farmers now migrating to cities or fighting to retain or regain their land, their incomes having been decimated by foreign-subsidized food imports and chemical-based factory farms.

Two million of these peasants are learning tough democracy and co-op organization by joining the Movimento dos Sem Terra (MST). Some have successfully occupied and stewarded fertile farmland owned by the wealthy. Some have been murdered by hired guns. Some want and some have gotten title to the land, but many regard the land as common property and eschew title and the consequent taxes.

With the lessons of the dictatorship and of rising democratic socialism, the PB experiments have been succeeding and spreading in the cities while co-op enterprises and co-op living develop in the countryside. Except for the food they held back for their own consumption, the pork, chicken, and rice raised by an MST co-op I visited on a Global Exchange tour were entirely for export.

Certainly the dictatorship and other hardships have toughened the Brazilians, while unionists, civic activists, and Marxist, anarchist, and social democratic theorists have encouraged popular self-governance. At WSF I heard little reference to fascism, but when mentioned it was relative to Washington rather than to an impending situation in Brazil.

☞ So, back to our earlier question. Is large-scale participatory democracy possible in the USA?

An "excess of democracy" was declared by foreign affairs specialists like Samuel Huntington in the 1970s and thereafter the social gains of the 1940s, '50s, and '60s have been eroded. The "war on

terrorism" continues this policy, albeit with a different pretext. Americans—people, that is, who live in the US—may still be "too fat" to be moved in great numbers to take action. But opinion polls show increasing interest in curbing corporate excesses and a sustaining of support for United Nations principles. However, only 1 out of 8 or 10 workers is unionized, and our unions are only lately wakening to global forces of oppression. This contrasts with Brazil, where PB has thrived—but only where a city's mayor was inclined toward socialism.

An even more critical difference is the disappearance in the US of major political party differences. Progressives have no place to go nationally. Political organization is made difficult by the increasing number of family hours devoted to work and declining hours of leisure, as well as the captivation of television which maintains an illusion of general affluence and of expertise in high places. Despite increasing school adoption of Howard Zinn's *Peoples History of the United States*, the numbers are small and the message overwhelmed by Hollywood and The History Channel.

Still, the majority of Americans devote some time to community volunteer work. Were this politicized, e.g., by spread of Enron/free trade disgust and discrediting of the now-popular occupant of the White House, the potential for local action is there. Where Brazil's drive for PB is party-based, Americans may have to find a civic organizational equivalent, possibly church-based like the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO), or small business letting go of the megacorporate/neoliberal model and reasserting local self-reliance. A start might be had by creating "budget-watch" groups in every municipality, as a kind of "shadow PB."

Many states have referendum, and some municipalities have town meeting. But these are exceptional. In Massachusetts, conservative forces in the legislature have ways of defeating popular initiatives. A key to a return to localism, and local self-governance, may be popularizing the process of critiquing that sacred cow, "representative democracy." Porto Alegre has led the way in showing the value of participatory democracy—politically and culturally, in everyday life. ■

Meanwhile, at the World Economic Forum... Davos Elites Moved to New York

by John A. MacArthur, publisher, *Harpers Magazine*

Toronto Globe & Mail, 9 Feb 2002



For those looking in from the outside, the power festival known as Davos-New York may well have had some sinister connotations. Certainly any gathering of 2,700 plutocrats, politicians, professors and pundits that bills itself as a world elite is bound to inflame the suspicion (one that I share) that democratic government has been hijacked by an unelected legislature of the rich and the unscrupulous.

Nevertheless, after five days of wandering around on the inside of the Waldorf-Astoria hotel, I can't help but feel that I've been misled about this so-called world elite, and so have all its critics. Above all, Davos is about the hollowness of public relations, the

hot air of advertising and the monotony of mutual congratulation—more so, at any rate, than the exercise of raw power. And if, as I concluded, empty phrases and fatuous rhetoric are the real stuff of Davos, then Davos and its elitists are ripe for overthrow—all we have to do is blow, and it will all come tumbling down.

Believe me, I tried to take the 31st World Economic Forum seriously. From the moment I passed through the metal detector, strapped on my super high-tech identification badge and got in line for my "Davos Companion," the hand-held computer given to all conferees, the needle on my self-importance meter was solidly in the red zone.

I had to be important, what with all those policeman guarding me against terrorists and the like. Never before had I been protected by a New York City cop with a submachine gun; never had I seen so many streets blocked off by so many mounted officers; never had I witnessed a police officer posted in front of all my favorite Manhattan fast food outlets. All this to permit me to participate in a bracing discussion centered on the conference title "Leadership in Fragile Times: A Vision for a Shared Future."

I'd also never been called a "Media Fellow," which I gather was a rank of considerable prestige. I'd applied to cover the forum as a mere journalist, but the gods in Geneva had seen fit to upgrade me to first class, and I found myself among the media elite as a full-fledged power player. In my welcome packet was a flattering invitation to lead a luncheon discussion around the theme, "Restoring Global Confidence: Is it the Message or the Media?" Of course, there were 77 other discussion leaders, one for every table, but that didn't stop me from making the most of it.

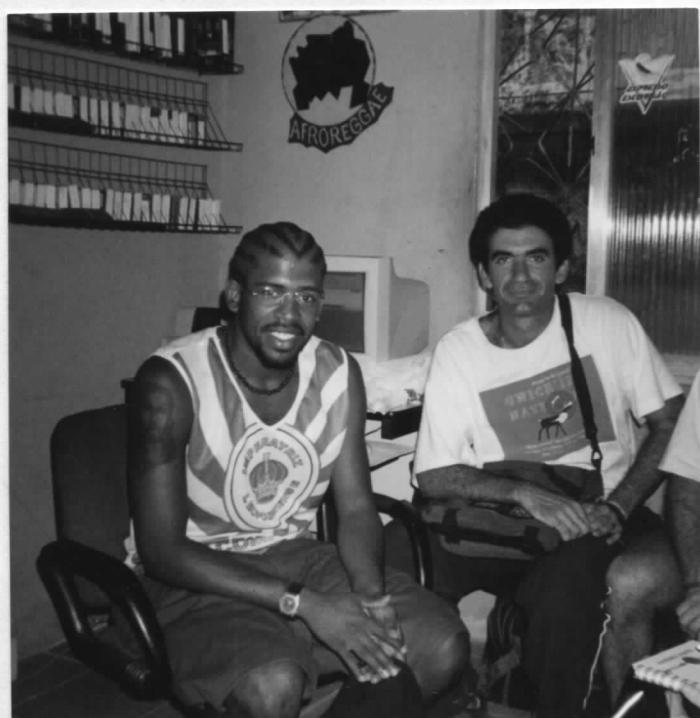
At public relations, Davos excelled beyond my wildest expectations. For so many people to speak at such length and say essentially nothing is a considerable achievement. I couldn't attend more than a few of the dozens of panel discussions, plenary sessions and "workshops," but the ones that I did attend would have sent me screaming for a refund had I been among the 1,000 corporate contributors who were paying the hotel bill.



105.9 is reserved for low-power (25w max) community radio throughout Brazil. Sparked by liberation-theologian priests in the 1970s, it took 6 months for Social Agenda (Rio) to buy land and start this station, which airs music, cooking, citizenship, gender violence, and other issues with open phones. Aimed at 7 middle-class neighborhoods and 29 favelas, this station aims to integrate—"We don't go there to teach, but to know each other and look for solutions together."

At "Management Update Making Hard Choices," for example, I was treated to the stunning insight from a business school professor that good chief executive officers are not "emotional," and that after a decade of inflated CEO rhetoric, what was needed was "nuts-and-bolts" management. A Japanese business school dean remarked that during the current recession, "the essence of strategy is choosing what not to do." Except that not doing anything sometimes meant, in the case of companies like Nissan, the acknowledgment that "we're going to close some factories; we're not going to do certain things."

It got worse. The next morning I attended a speech by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, in which he declared that "security promotes development and development promotes security" and called for a strengthening of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, the very institutions that were just now enraging citizens from Buenos Aires to Quebec City, not to mention the demonstrators in front of the Waldorf.



In Favela Vigario Geral, Anderson Sa explains his music-based organization which has saved scores of youth from drug-war involvement. In a "Brazilian Bosnia," police had invaded and murdered 17 youth in the entrance courtyard. Now one "AfroReggae" band has toured Europe and made a Beatles-like video. Ford Foundation and the UK embassy are providing development funds. Music training works for street kids. Another organization in Rio proves that circus training does too.

If you were frustrated that Mr. Schroeder seemed uncomprehending of the reasons for the anti-globalization movement, you could move on to a discussion titled "Understanding Global Anger: More Storms Ahead?" where the CEO of McDonald's Corp., Jack Greenberg, purported to explore the issue with four foreigners, including the President of Poland.

The chief hamburger salesman had memorized some lines for the occasion "I think it's clear that the catalogue of [global] problems are real . . . but perception oftentimes doesn't square with reality." The McDonald's reality was that while demonstrators went wild during "four days of problems in Seattle," breaking windows in fast food franchises,

Mr. Greenberg's troops were serving 175 million customers under golden arches all over the world. What this proved, I don't know, unless Mr. Greenberg believes that the mere fact that something is popular makes it a good thing, or that eating Big Macs is inherently more meaningful than protesting the production of hormone-injected beef.

Thus, during the question period, I was tempted to mention that Corvairs and thalidomide were popular for a time, as were Hitler and Mussolini. But as a media fellow, I felt obliged to maintain standards of "niceness," in keeping with the inclusive atmosphere of Davos, which this year featured the millionaire rock star Bono pushing Third World debt relief, Barbara Stocking of Oxfam International lecturing on corporate responsibility and Kumi Naidoo of Civicus promoting the importance of citizen participation in the great debates of the day, though no ordinary citizens were anywhere in sight. (Andres Pastrana, the President of Colombia, was a scratch; evidently he was busy trying to control all the local anger back at home.)

Instead, I asked how it was that no one had commented on the exploits of José Bové, the French sheep farmer turned scourge of McDonald's, who was just then attending the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Thus far, all the talk had been pseudo-compassionate treacle about the poor and the "anger" emanating from the "South," as though the moderator, Frederick Schauer of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, was conducting an interdisciplinary colloquium for psychology and sociology graduate students.

Mr. Greenberg tensed slightly, but he remembered his PR lessons, referring to Mr. Bové only as "that individual" and "the Frenchman" who "obviously has a social agenda and likes to have his picture in The New York Times." He advised the audience "to separate the loud voices of a few people from the voices of the customers who outnumber [the protesters] by a factor of a thousand."

My fellow Davosites seemed satisfied. I just felt a vague sense of nausea. But I guess I'm on the wrong side of history, or at least of modern public relations. The next morning, The Times published a photograph, not of Mr. Bové, but of Jack Greenberg. I felt reassured. I'd indeed got the point of Davos. ■

WASHINGTON FOLLIES

Bush Earmarks 1.5 Billion Gold Stars for Education

Lazy kids? This just might do it! ★ ★ ★ ★

WASHINGTON, D.C. Vowing to give the nation's public schools "a much needed boost," President Bush announced Monday that his 2003 budget proposal would allocate 1.5 billion gold-star stickers for education. Bush went on to describe the "alarming state" of many of the nation's public schools, citing underpaid teachers, buildings badly in need of repair, and woefully outdated textbooks.

"If a child is going to learn under these conditions, he or she is going to need lots of encouragement," Bush said. "These gold stars will serve as reinforcement for our best students while motivating under-achievers to do better. You have no idea what a difference it makes to a young child's self-esteem to see a big, shiny star at the top of his or her spelling test. I know it made a big difference to me as a child."

"Can we really put a price tag on the future of our nation?" Bush asked. "Can we ever put a dollar amount on success?"

Should the Bush proposal pass, teachers in any school across the country will be eligible for up to 200 gold stars, depending upon the population of the school. The stars will then be distributed to students

according to academic performance and need for encouragement.

"I am so thrilled to hear this," said Linda Egan, a sixth-grade teacher at Chicago's Eisenhower Elementary School, one of Bush's "Gold Star Schools." "For so long, we've been just barely scraping by with no federal support whatsoever. Now I feel like we've got a friend in Washington." Bush is not without opposition. Shortly after the press conference, U.S. Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC) called the president's plan "preposterous." "What kind of president would think that distributing gold stars would improve the country's education system?" Hollings said. "Kids don't even care about gold stars anymore. At the very least, we're going to need Pokémon stickers and lick-'n'-stick Hello Kitty stamps. And what about candy? The president is talking about rewarding good behavior, and he doesn't even mention candy?"

Bush said that if the gold stars are successful, he intends to expand the program to include other achievement-fostering adhesives. Among them are sheets of stickers featuring ducks, turtles, and other cartoon animals offering students such exhortations as "Awesome!," "Super Job!," and "You Deserve A High Five!"

Despite his confidence in his gold-star plan, Bush stressed that the government cannot be expected to fix America's schools by itself. "I ask that each and every American do their part," Bush said. "If you can spare any gold stars, stickers, or even a sparkly pencil or multi-colored pen, please donate it to your local school district. We've all got to come together to make this work."



Leader of the Terra Prometida community of 94 peasant families camped on federal land in Rio de Janeiro state, explains problems of acquiring idle adjacent private land for farming. Landlords want to keep title to 1800 acres as collateral for more loans. So they fake productivity by photographing trucks supposedly exporting produce. The community gets legal help from the landless workers movement MST.



Diamonds Are Bad for You

Ten Reasons Why You Should Never Accept One

by Liz Stanton, Staff Economist, Center for Popular Economics

1. You've Been Psychologically Conditioned To Want a Diamond

The diamond engagement ring is a 63-year-old invention of N.W.Ayer advertising agency. The De Beers diamond cartel contracted N.W. Ayer to create a demand for what are, essentially, useless hunks of rock.

2. Diamonds are Priced Well Above Their Value

The De Beers cartel has systematically held diamond prices at levels far greater than their abundance would generate under anything even remotely resembling perfect competition. All diamonds not already under its control are bought by the cartel, and then the De Beers cartel carefully managed world diamond supply in order to keep prices steadily high.

3. Diamonds Have No Resale or Investment Value

Any diamond that you buy or receive will indeed be yours forever De Beers' advertising deliberately brain-washed women not to sell; the steady price is a tool to prevent speculation in diamonds; and no dealer will buy a diamond from you. You can only sell it at a diamond purchasing center or a pawn shop where you will receive a tiny fraction of its original "value."

4. Diamond Miners are Disproportionately Exposed to HIV/AIDS

Many diamond mining camps enforce all-male, no-family rules. Men contract HIV/AIDS from camp sex-workers, while women married to miners have no access to employment, no income outside of their husbands and no bargaining power for negotiating safe sex, and thus are at extremely high risk of contracting HIV.

5. Open-Pit Diamond Mines Pose Environmental Threats

Diamond mines are open pits where salts, heavy minerals, organisms, oil, and chemicals from mining equipment freely leach into ground-water, endangering people in nearby mining camps and villages, as well as downstream plants and animals.

6. Diamond Mine-Owners Violate Indigenous People's Rights

Diamond mines in Australia, Canada, India and many countries in Africa are situated on lands traditionally associated with indigenous peoples. Many of these communities have been displaced, while others remain, often at great cost to their health, livelihoods and traditional cultures.

7. Slave Laborers Cut and Polish Diamonds

More than one-half of the world's diamonds are processed in India where many of the cutters and polishers are bonded child laborers. Bonded children work to pay off the debts of their relatives, often unsuccessfully. When they reach adulthood their debt is passed on to their younger siblings or to their own children.

8. Conflict Diamonds Fund Civil Wars in Africa

There is no reliable way to insure that your diamond was not mined or stolen by government or rebel military forces in order to finance civil conflict. Conflict diamonds are traded either for guns or for cash to pay and feed soldiers.

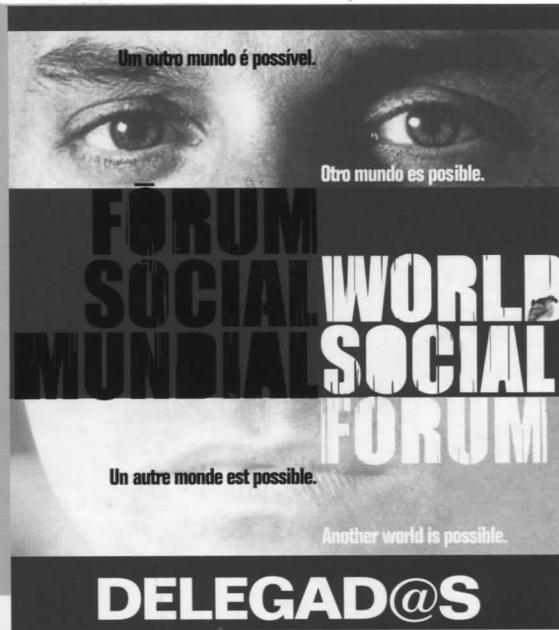
9. Diamond Wars are Fought Using Child Warriors

Many diamond producing governments and rebel forces use children as soldiers, laborers in military camps, and sex slaves. Child soldiers are given drugs to overcome their fear and reluctance to participate in atrocities.

10. Small Arms Trade is Intimately Related to Diamond Smuggling

Illicit diamonds inflame the clandestine trade of small arms. There are 500 billion small arms in the world today which are used to kill 500,000 people annually, the vast majority of whom are non-combatants.

31 de janeiro a 5 de fevereiro de 2002



Porto Alegre - Rio Grande do Sul - Brasil

GUIDELINES for INDY PAGE editors

BCA Dispatch is experimenting with an Indy Page (opposite)—a page of 850-900 words edited independently by and for Dispatch readers. It may consist of one article or several, with or without graphics. Ideally, the Indy Page editor should have some experience in editing, but you can do the job if you have the ability, plus feedback from other readers before submission.

The easiest way to prepare material is to select it as you wish from the internet or retype or scan it from book(s) or periodical(s), with or without your own accompanying remarks. Your remarks might be crafted to make it easier for the reader to think about the material, to discuss it, or to take action on it. For easy writing of your own material: Write your "testimony." Or write a letter to "Aunt Jane."

Whether the material is yours or borrowed, the ideas expressed should be clearly laid out, should stick to a few essential points, and be put into clear language. If the material is deliberately poetic or surrealistic, the same criteria may not apply, but it will be harder to produce a good piece with good results for readers.

The space limitation is strict—if your material is over 900 words it may be necessary to print it in reduced-size type, making it difficult for older people, or people with visual problems, or who lack patience, to read it. You should submit the material electronically (by e-mail or floppy disk) with suggestions for layout, or negotiate with Dispatch editor. It will be inserted within the page border and under The Indy Page headline (with brief identifying information on the editor—please submit such information). BCAD's address is <DLewit@igc.org> Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St 2H, Boston 02116 Phone 617 266 8687

The Indy Page

All material on this page is the responsibility of a citizen editor, independent of the BCA Dispatch editorial staff. This issue's editor is Joseph Wronka of Amherst, Professor of Social Work at Springfield College, now a visiting scholar at Heller School, Brandeis University. Contact him at joseph_wronka@spfldcol.edu or call 413-748-3067.

Creating a Human Rights Culture in Massachusetts

by Joseph Wronka

At the State House on May 17th last year, 45 minutes before midnight, I testified for a little known, but potentially very powerful bill on human rights, House Bill No. 850—"A Resolve Providing for an Investigation and Study by a Special Commission Relative to Integrating International Human Rights Standards in Massachusetts Laws and Policies." Citing official and other sources, I noted that one in three children go to bed hungry each night, that between 3 and 6 million are homeless, and that in Massachusetts child abuse is third nationwide.

I quoted former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis who asserted that states should act as "laboratories of democracy," to extend rights not found in the federal constitution. I indicated that Massachusetts has already declared December 10 Human Rights Day, endorsing the Universal Declaration of Human rights the authoritative definition of human rights standards. I argued that the Commonwealth should continue in that tradition and try to integrate international human rights standards into its laws and policies. Such standards include economic, social, and cultural rights such as rights to health care, shelter, security in old age, employment, social insurance, and rest and leisure.

The few members of the Joint Judiciary Committee remaining at that midnight hour—this was the last bill to be heard that day—stated that if you want economic, social, and cultural rights, you have to get a job and work hard for them. Such a study was the job of the academic community, not state legislators, and this committee did not have funds anyway to take care of some of the human rights violations mentioned. I could not help but think of the socially conscious film director Alan Resnais and his *Night and Fog* about the atrocities of Hitler's concentration camps. Toward the end of the film, Resnais showed clips of the accused in the Nuremberg trials stating one after the other, "I am not responsible." Showing, as I recall, thousands of dead bodies bulldozed into pits, he asks "Who then is responsible?"

Whereas it may seem like a long haul from the horrors of concentration camps, we are reminded that the life expectancy of African-American men in inner cities and Native American men on reservations is roughly forty-two years. They may not be formally bulldozed into mass graves, but certainly racism, sexism, classism—call it what you like—have railroaded these men and others who may be homeless, hungry, or lacking in adequate health care, to untimely deaths. Society, dulled to the plight of the oppressed, may whimper occasionally but more often than not succumbs to what Hannah Arendt has called the "banality of evil"—saying and doing nothing.

The challenge as I see it is to create a culture which is a "lived awareness" of human rights principles. That is, the rights asserted in human rights documents like the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights and its UN progeny such as the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, become embedded in one's heart, mind, and body. Thus homelessness and poverty would not exist, because people would feel, deeply feel, that shelter was a human right.

I feel that House Bill 850 is one way of getting from "here"—a culture which largely does not acknowledge human rights—to "there"—a culture willing to implement these rights. It would actually be a way of educating others as to what human rights are and how these rights stack up with Massachusetts laws and policies.

In comparing the Massachusetts Constitution with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in my book, *Human Rights and Social Policy in the 21st Century*, I found that the Massachusetts Constitution made no mention of human dignity, education, medical care, collective bargaining, employment, shelter, security in old age, special protections for children and motherhood, participation in the cultural life of the community, favorable remuneration and conditions for work, and food as human rights. Constitutions, from the Latin *constitare*, meaning "to choose," represent societal choices, and sadly, in the Commonwealth, our choices are not to help "the least of these."

To create a human rights culture, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights needs to be taught in our schools. Eleanor Roosevelt, chairperson of its drafting committee, wanted children to know it like the Bill of Rights. In 1998 when I attended the Human Rights Defenders Conference in Paris celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration, I remember watching on television a short skit on Article I of the Declaration where actors danced and sang the words "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" (Article 1). At the end of the dance, they all said "Think about it." I also learned that in Norway an article of the Rights of the Child is displayed on television. We need advertising emphasizing human rights as actually legal mandates to fulfill human need.

We need also to compare all our state laws and policies with human rights instruments. In doing so we may begin to slowly close the gap between these documents. But first there must be a human rights culture, where our values are in accord with human rights principles. Then laws and socially just policies will follow, which emphasize the dignity of the human person and will lead us to what Martin Luther King called the "Beloved Community."

If you wish to support Human Rights House Bill 850 you can still write Rep. Angelo Scaccio requesting him to release the bill from House Study 4280 to the Judiciary Committee for a favorable report and/or Rep. David Donnelly and Senator Robert Creedon, co-chairs of the Joint Judiciary Committee requesting that they give the bill a favorable report. They are at the State House, Boston MA 02133.

Other Alliance News

(Continued from Page 1)

Brit Eckhart's seminar on strategic non-violence--**A Force More Powerful**, has 8 regular participants and excited biweekly discussions. Call 617-722-2637 x2.

North Bridge AfD drew 650 people to an address by **Howard Zinn** at the First Parish Church in Harvard Square on 10 Feb, raising more than \$10,000 net for their chapter and national AfD! Howard stressed the continuity--not "everything has changed"-- of 9/11 in US history.

Bill King, Brit Eckhart, and Dave Lewit continue to form a **Localization Study and Action Group** with **Julie Petot, Charles Strader and DeWayne Dickerson**. The group met at Charles' school in Ashby MA to continue to develop mission. Call 617-266-8687.

Dave also attended a breakfast discussion of local leadership sponsored by Boston's **Responsible Business Association**, which spun off from Business for Social Responsibility when big corporate influence became evident.

Sharia Lite

from *In These Times*, 18 Feb 2002

With the zealots in hiding, Afghanistan now returns to a seamy normality. In Kandahar, Pashtun big shots may again stroll the streets with their rent boys, while in the hinterlands peasants dream of the coming year's poppy harvest. Afghan malefactors still face the sanctions of *sharia*, the Islamic law, but with all sorts of loopholes.

Ahamat Ullha Zarif, a prominent Afghan judge, explained that adulterers will still be stoned to death, as dictated by *sharia*, but they will be given a sporting chance to get away. "We will use only small stones," he told Agence France Press. "If they are able to run away, they are free."

Other signs of enlightenment? "The Taliban used to hang the victim's body in public for four days," Zarif said. "We will hang the body only for a short time, say, 15 minutes."

ACTION ALERTS

NAFTA - The Hidden Chapter 11

Bill Moyers exposes the clauses which allow foreign corporations for the first time in history to sue the US Government for unlimited damages for profits lost or foregone on account of US health or environmental regulations-- and keep getting more damages until we repeal the law! **Channel 2, Thursday, Feb 21, 8:00 p.m.** 60 minutes.

Acclaimed Art Documentary: "Life and Debt" --Jamaica's struggle with the IMF, World Bank, and globalization.

Music by Bob Marley, Mutabaruka, Ziggy Marley, Sizzla, Buju Banton.. **Friday, February 22 through Thursday, February 28**

Special: Director Stephanie Black speaks opening night, this Friday.

Brattle Theater, Harvard Square 617-876-6837

Cosponsors: BankBusters www.bostonglobalaction.net/bankbusters
Massachusetts Jobs with Justice 617-524-8778; Global Exchange

Porto Alegre and the World Social Forum – Report Back

Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy, and

Daniel Moss (or Maria Aguiar), Grassroots International.

Thursday, March 19, 6:30–9 p.m.

Central Square Library, 45 Pearl Street, Cambridge 617-349-4010

Sponsor: American Friends Service Committee 617-497-5273

JOIN THE BCA

Please help us as we fight to make a better future for ourselves and our children – Join the Boston/Cambridge Alliance for Democracy.

(Cut out this form and send it to Dave Lewit at 271 Dartmouth Street, Boston, MA 02116.)

BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY PLEDGE

\$26/Year - "Count me in!"

\$52/Year - "Sustainer" (We need to average this amount.)

\$104/Year - "Contributor" (Helping us thrive.)

\$208/year - "Community Steward" --"Tithe"

\$500/Year - "Realize the vision"

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