



# a matter of spirit

This issue: The Commons

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## The Commons

Jay Walljasper

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**W**elcome to the commons. The term may be unfamiliar, but the idea has been around for centuries. The commons is actually a new use of an old word, meaning what we all share. The things that belong to all of us are more important than ever at a time when modern society faces a daunting future of economic turmoil, environmental upheaval and social breakdown. A new understanding of the commons can help us find our way to a saner, safer, greener, more equitable, comfortable and enjoyable tomorrow.

social networks that hold our communities together; to the genetic building blocks of life itself—these are all part of the commons.

Some of these things we share—such as parks and streets, clean air and water—are quite obvious. Other examples of the commons become clearer the more we reflect on this idea. The Internet and the airwaves, for instance, which are owned by no one. So are blood banks, neighborhood organizations and many other efforts people have created together to meet their needs.

All these and countless other marvels constitute our inheritance as human beings, and no corporation, government or individuals should be able to prohibit us from using them by claiming exclusive rights or imposing restrictions or a fee. This principle is enshrined in Catholic teaching. “The right to private property, acquired or received in a just way, does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of mankind (sic),” states the official Catechism of the Catholic Church (no. 2403).

Anyone can certainly draw upon the commons in pursuit of their own endeavors—and we are

all richer for it. That’s the greatest strength of the commons. This shared endowment is available for anyone to draw upon for their own purposes, which then adds to the overall value of the commons.

*“People all over the world are stepping up to protect and reclaim the commons.”*

At least that’s the way it has worked for epochs of human history, bequeathing us everything from our democratic institutions and wealth of cultural offerings to technological, medical, economic and humanitarian advances that enrich our lives. But in recent years we’ve seen a growing threat to this natural cycle. More and more the commons are being fenced off as someone’s personal domain.

### First Step Toward Reclaiming What’s Ours

But here’s some good news: People all over the world are stepping up to protect and reclaim the commons. Neighbors rising up to keep their library open, improve their park, or find new funding for their public school are saving the commons. Environmentalists fighting the draining of wetlands and dumping of toxics in inner cities and are protecting the commons. Digital activists providing



People gathered at the Seattle Center enjoy the commons

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The commons is a whole realm of valuable assets that belong to us all. They range from oceans and wildlife preserves; to languages and artistic traditions; to human knowledge generated through science and law; to the informal

access to the Internet in poor communities and challenging corporate or government plans to limit access to information are expanding the commons. Indigent people instilling a sense of tradition and hope in their children are preserving the commons. Community groups speaking out against sprawl and reviving local shopping districts are reinvigorating the commons. All the citizens who begin to question fanatical devotion to the free market and extreme individualism—radical ideologies that became deeply embedded in the modern world over recent decades at the expense of much that we hold dear—are taking a step toward reclaiming the commons.

Few of these people would think of themselves as “commons activists.” Some may not even be familiar with the term. That doesn’t matter. What’s important is that these efforts and many others like them represent a bold new spirit that prizes things we share together as much as things we possess individually.

The role of the commons today can be compared to the state of the environment in the 1960s.

city kids, suburbia swallowing up the countryside, mountains of trash piling up in landfills and the possible effects of nuclear power. Bringing all these issues together under the banner of environmentalism highlighted the connections between what until then had been

wrong in our times. It provides a toolkit of practical solutions that all of us—everyday citizens, business leaders, public officials—can employ to create a brighter future for coming generations. These kinds of efforts extend the scope of the commons beyond that of a noun

to an adjective (“commons-based solutions,” “commons-based society”) and eventually to a verb. Peter Linebaugh, a leading historian on the commons, has coined the word “commoning” to describe the growing roster of projects to protect and strengthen the things we share.

The vision of a “commons-based society” is emerging at precisely the point we need it most. The deeply held myths of the last 30 years—the worship of unregulated markets in the global economy and the wholesale rejection of public or cooperative initiatives as a way to solve problems—shattered after the implosion of the global financial bubble.

To deliver us from current economic and ecological calamities will require more than administering a few tweaks to the operating system we use to run our society. A complete retooling is needed. Some would call this a “paradigm shift”—a reexamination of the core principles that guide all elements of our culture top-to-bottom and that chart the direction we are headed.

At this historical moment, as all of us help clean up the wreckage of an operating system that lionized the “me” and minimized the “we,” the vision of a commons-based society instills bright hopes for tomorrow. ~



*Hope grows in a Vancouver, B.C. community garden*

Creative Commons 2.0 / United Way—Lower Mainland

seen as separate concerns. This nourished the spectacular growth of the environmental movement.

Linking the numerous social and environmental concerns related to the commons would help spark a powerful new wave of citizen activism that might shape popular consciousness in ways reminiscent of the environmental, civil rights and women’s movements. Articulating the broad concept of the commons throughout

all available channels could exert lasting influence on cultural trends and public policy. And applying commons thinking to a wide range of specific problems demanding action—from initiatives promoting public health to campaigns against draconian copyright laws that squelch human creativity—would make a difference in the lives of millions.

This is because the commons offers more than simply a philosophical and political framework for understanding what’s gone

*“To deliver us from current economic and ecological calamities will require more than administering a few tweaks to the operating system we use to run our society. A complete retooling is needed.”*

At that time, there was little talk about ecology or the Greening of anything. There was wide concern about air pollution, pesticides, litter, the loss of wilderness, declining wildlife populations, the death of Lake Erie, toxic substances oozing into rivers, oil slicks fouling the oceans, lead paint poisoning inner

# Commodification & the Commons

Kim Klein

Although we hear it said that the most valuable things in life are not things, we live in a culture where almost everything has a monetary value. We are familiar with most of these: our labor, any actual things that we buy, and the services we use. But what happens in a society when trees are given a monetary value based on the oxygen they produce or when scenery is used as a measurement of property value? When we turn noncommercial items into goods that are bought and sold, we participate in commodification. As promoters of the commons, we need to be aware of commodification in the organizations where we do our work. The following story is an example of that:

People United for Bikeways (PUB) has 100 paid members and 500 people on their e-mail list. They have had success creating bike paths in their community, creating bike racks at public transportation hubs and distributing free bikes to low income commu-



*The Golden Gate Bridge stands free of advertisements and commodification*

nities. They mostly raise money from membership, but they also distribute a list of businesses that have supported bike paths. Some businesses have offered to pay to be on the list, but so far, the only way you can get on the list is to actually do work. They have one paid staff and dozens of activists who work on bike related issues. They were advised by a funder to “go to scale.” Having no

idea what that means, but thinking that the funder probably knows best, they brought in a consultant. The consultant advised:

1. Create a logo and let bike stores, outdoor recreation stores and the like use it for advertising for a fee. As the consultant reminds them, “You have got to push out your brand. The YMCA is the most valuable brand in the USA. You could be the most valuable brand in this town.”
2. Franchise the brand to other communities for a fee.
3. Calculate the value of the unpaid volunteer time and add that to the budget to look bigger.
4. Calculate the value to homeowners of living on a street with a bike path and advertise that to real estate agencies and the city.
5. Get people of influence and affluence on the board so people want to be associated with PUB. Gradually get rid of the current board.

6. Ask the city for permission to charge a small fee to use a particularly beautiful path that goes along a disused trolley line that PUB converted to a

bike path.

The list goes on, but it all involves calculating the value of things that exist or creating things that don't exist yet and calculating their value. The activists of PUB decided to go with #4 and reject the others.

Few organizations are as together as PUB and able to reject this wholesale commodification except in the rare instance where it makes sense.

Sometimes we are able to recognize and reject it instantly. A few years ago, the Highway

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and Transportation District that controls the Golden Gate Bridge announced that they wanted to let a corporation hang a banner off the bridge as a way to make money.

People were so outraged that the bridge would be corporatized that the idea was dropped before any corporation had a chance to bid on it.

Most of the time it is not that clear. The complete opposite of something as public as the bridge is private prisons. In Tucson, AZ, people who have come from Mexico without documentation to work are arrested every day and then sentenced to serve time in private prisons. They are usually sent to a prison in Florence, CO run by the Corrections Corporation of America and then deported. Almost 1,000 people per week are sent to Florence, at a cost



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of \$2,270 per person per month, which totals to \$2 million tax dollars being paid to private prisons every week. The commodification and profit of undocumented immigrants is profound. They do their work for very little money, are sent to prison for a lot of money and are then sent home.

How do we resist commodification? To start, we need to assert certain old phrases, such as, “Some things are priceless.” Some things have no value, and there should be no attempt to give them a price; their worth lies in not having monetary value. These include volunteer time, iconic views and history, as well as water, wilderness, air and other commons.

Another adage is “People are

more important than profit.” In our example above, PUB decided not to monetize their logo and sell it to businesses, but to maintain the integrity of the recommended businesses.

Peter Maurin, the teacher of

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*“The commodification and profit of undocumented immigrants is profound.”*

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Dorothy Day, said, “Our job is to create a society in which it is easy to be good.” This simple statement is a radical reframe of the mainstream worldview.

When I ponder this, I ask myself, “What circumstances allow me to be a good person?” When

do I feel I have manifested what St. Paul called “the fruits of the Spirit”— joy, kindness, patience, generosity, gentleness, and self-control? They are days when I am not overcommitted, when I feel the love of friends, when I am confident in my work, when I feel physically safe and financially secure, and when I know that I am part of a community.

It is easy to conceptualize the society we need for most people to be good. It is one in which being is as important as doing, and in which commodities are things which are produced for sale, not pieces of life. Dedication to this society needs to be the fundamental driver of our commons work. ~



## Time Banks

The commons is prosperous in Lyttelton, New Zealand.

In efforts to rebuild after a devastating earthquake, the town furthered its development of a Time Bank, an alternative currency system where people trade hour-for-hour work. Now, neighbors use their gifts and skills to provide for each other. Citizens can trade one hour of carpentry work for one hour of babysitting, or one hour of legal assistance for one hour of gardening. As Lyttelton recovers, its community thrives.

You can learn more about this tight-knit commons community at:  
[www.lyttelton.net.nz](http://www.lyttelton.net.nz)

For a directory of the U.S. time banks visit:  
[www.community.timebanks.org](http://www.community.timebanks.org)

## Agripreneurs

Reginald Haslett-Marroquin is leading the way in meeting the demand for more affordable locally raised food while also breaking the cycle of poverty for Latinos.



Minnesota, and particularly small towns like Northfield, MN, are seeing increases in the Latino population— up 75 percent over the last decade. Nearly one-fourth of Latinos live in poverty, more than double the poverty rate of all Minnesotans. However, would-be Latino farmers face barriers such as lack of access to land, financing, and proper training.

Haslett-Marroquin, Program Director for Main Street Projects, developed an “agripreneur” training program to prepare new farmers to run small-scale free-range poultry farms. Not only is this commons-based development initiative meeting the demand for local food, but it is strengthening the commons by benefiting the community as a whole. As a result of this initiative, Main Street Projects expects to see stronger families, improved health through nutrition, and increased sustainability.

So far, 28 people have participated in the training program which began in September 2011. While this initiative is catching people’s attention as innovative, for Haslett-Marroquin, who grew up in Guatemala, where his family still farms communal lands, it is simply returning to his roots. “I come from the commons, and I am going back to the commons. The whole idea about the commons is so entrenched in what we are doing.” Adapted from “A Latino Entrepreneur Who is Pioneering ‘Commons-Based Development with Immigrants,’” by Leah Cooper, [www.onthecommons.org](http://www.onthecommons.org) and [www.mainstreetproject.org](http://www.mainstreetproject.org)

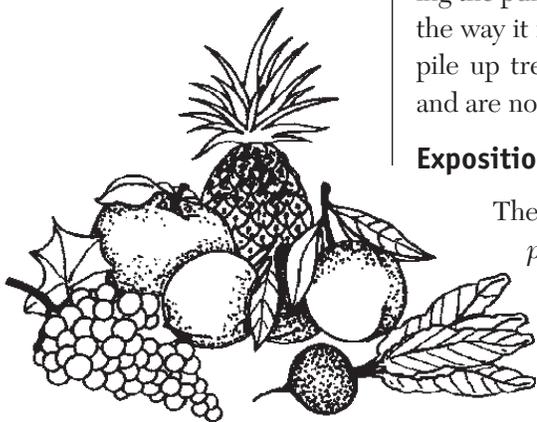
# Greed, the Rich Farmer & the American Dream

Darel Grothaus

Some guy in the crowd hollered at Jesus, “Hey Teacher, make my brother cough up my share of our inheritance!”

Jesus confronted this bitter brother, “Man, no one has appointed me a judge to settle family feuds over money. Listen to me! You’re struggling with an issue that is far more important than your inheritance. Watch out! Be on guard against the insidious ways that greed can harden your hearts and seduce your souls. You are far more valuable than your inheritance.”

Sensing this was a teachable moment, Jesus told a story about the treachery of greed:



*The bountiful harvest is gifted to us as common wealth.*

“The land of a rich man was very productive, and he didn’t know what to do with all of the abundance. So, he took his problem to the smartest guy he knew—himself—and asked, ‘Self, what am I going to do with *my* bumper harvests? I don’t have any place to store *my* huge harvests.’”

He flashed on a really bright idea: “I’ll tear down *my* barns and silos and build gigantic replacements so I can store all *my* crops and protect all *my* treasures I’ve acquired.”

“Then, I’ll give myself a standing ovation. ‘Self, you done good! You done really good! You are a shrewd farmer and entrepreneurial wizard! You’ve got so much socked away you won’t have to worry about anything for years to come! Self, you can dine, wine, and shine!’”

God was rolling his eyes; and finally had enough of this fool; and got in the face of this rich farmer, “You arrogant jerk! Tonight, all these things you’ve accumulated will pull your life out from underneath you. Then who’s going to get all of these treasures you’ve accumulated?”

Jesus paused for a moment to let the story sink in before delivering the punch line, “This is always the way it is for greedy fools who pile up treasures for themselves and are not rich toward God.”

## Exposition of the Text

The Greek word for greed, *pleonexia*, means to *have more*. Greed is our addiction to acquiring more and more of whatever we believe will secure our future and give our lives meaning. It is driven by our *obsessive fear* that we can never have enough.

The rich farmer’s *arrogance* was based on his fantasy that he alone was the source of the land’s productivity. His arrogance escalated to a conviction that he alone was *entitled* to the exclusive enjoyment of all the fruits of the land’s productivity.

Catch how differently Jesus

describes the source of the rich farmer’s wealth: *Our Creator’s generous gift* of this fecund and fruitful creation is the source of all wealth!

“Fool” as in God’s condemnation, “You fool!” connotes *willful ignorance*.

The farmer’s *possessions destroyed his life*—not an overt act of divine judgment. The literal translation of verse 20a reads, “These things will demand your life.”

## Listening to the Text in the American Context

Greed propels the dominant and demonic version of the American Dream—unceasing, obsessive accumulation of material wealth and power as the emblem of individual, corporate and national triumph.

The farmer deluded himself that he alone was the source of his land’s productivity, but Jesus punctured his arrogant fantasy with this truth, the *gift of the land* was the source of the farmer’s wealth. The rich farmer’s arrogance reflects its contemporary counterpart in the American mythology that the rich have earned their wealth as solo acts by dint of their entrepreneurial drive, shrewdness and 80 hour work weeks. In their fantasy, nothing in the created world and our

*“All wealth is gifted to us as common wealth, because we are all birthed and sustained from the gifts of the created universe and our social relationships.”*

common life contributes to their material wealth and power.

A contemporary application of Jesus’ truth punctures this ancient



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myth: All wealth is gifted to us as *common wealth* because we are all birthed and sustained from the gifts of the created universe and our social relationships. Our individual sharing in the common wealth requires that we continue to preserve and nurture it. If we exploit the common wealth for our sole benefit, we will eventually destroy that upon which our wealth depends. Consider how strip mining is destroying the life sustaining gifts of clean air, water and soil.

The farmer's arrogance escalated to the conviction that he alone was *entitled to the exclusive enjoyment of all the fruits of the land's productivity* none of it was to be shared. We see this today in public policies whose effect increases the wealth of the rich and exacerbates the gross disparities between the rich and poor.

Jesus' admonition, "Watch out

for greed in all its insidious forms," warns us to search out the subtle and culturally rewarding ways that greed infiltrates our lives. Consider how honorable virtues—hard work, diligence, prudence, preparation for the future, entrepreneurial creativity are transformed by greed in the obsessive pursuit of the demonic form of the American Dream. The dominant culture celebrates these virtues as the necessary means of pursuing our addiction to *pleonexia* /never having enough.

It is difficult to discern the difference between prudential responsibility to care for our material and social wellbeing and obsessive anxiety about scarcity that hijacks our lives in the relentless pursuit

of more and more.

Discerning the difference is greatly complicated in this economic crisis for middle and some higher income folks because assets we have counted on to sustain our lives from youth to old age have been greatly diminished and even destroyed, e.g., jobs, public education, health care, social services, retirement savings and pensions.

*"There is an urgent calling for communities of faith and other communities of moral reflection and accountability to offer guidance to those of us struggling with how much is enough."*

Discerning the difference between prudential responsibility and obsessive anxiety asks the fundamental question, *How much is enough?* The rich farmer was certain how to answer the question because he consulted only himself! He did not consult a community of moral reflection and accountability that could have guided him through the delusions and deceptions of greed and obsessive anxiety to the wisdom of generosity and joy.

There is an urgent calling for communities of faith and other communities of moral reflection and accountability to offer guidance to those of us struggling with how much is enough.

Let us heed Jesus' warning to the angry brother consumed with greed, "Watch out! Be on guard against the insidious ways that greed can harden your hearts, mess with your minds and seduce your souls. You are far more valuable than your inheritance!" ~

## Commons Resources

### Websites

On the Commons—[www.onthecommons.org](http://www.onthecommons.org)  
A Commons movement strategy center

Project for Public Spaces—[www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)  
Resources for creating public spaces that build stronger communities

Time Banks—[www.timebanks.org](http://www.timebanks.org)  
A movement that uses hours for currency

### Documentaries

*Fixing the Future*. DVD, 60 min, 2011  
Communities using innovative approaches to creating jobs based on the values of shared prosperity, fairness, wellness, sustainability, and creativity.

### Print

*Kosmos Journal*—Available in print or at [www.kosmosjournal.org](http://www.kosmosjournal.org)

Walljasper, Jay. *All That We Share: How to save the Economy, the Environment, the Internet, Democracy, Our Communities, and Everything Else That Belongs to All of Us*. 2010.



# The Digital Commons

Nicco Mele

More than half of all Americans own a smart phone or tablet like the iPad.<sup>1</sup> These small, mobile devices constitute a power I call “radical connectivity”—an intense amount of reach and availability for a single individual, always tethered to the moment. Radical connectivity also creates, almost by accident, the most incredible exchange of information ever assembled: a global digital commons.



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Smart phones bring news, the weather, and community to our fingertips.

One of the amazing things about the way our technology has developed is the sharing culture of the internet. Wikipedia, perhaps the greatest collection of human knowledge ever assembled—or I should say, ever being assembled, as its work continues day and night—is an entirely volunteer operation. Open source technical development, with its emphasis on making complicated technology available for free—like OpenOffice, a free alternative to the expensive Microsoft Office—is another example of the digital commons culture of the internet. Never before have so many people had access to so much information and knowledge.

In their book *The Groundswell*, Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff

describe the increase of the digital commons as “a

social trend where people use technology to get what they need directly from each other rather than from institutions.”<sup>2</sup> This creates powerful opportunities for the commons—using websites like Craigslist and Freecycle, more Americans are participating in “collaborative consumption,”

sharing and trading outside our established economy. Couchsurfing.com has over 5 million volunteers in more than 97,000 cities in 207 countries offering a spare bedroom or sofa. Not using your car? Share it with a stranger on RelayRides.com.

Radical connectivity allows for an unprecedented sharing of resources in the physical world, powered by the digital commons.

The digital commons is not without dangers. Creators—musicians, painters, writers, photographers—face significant challenges in getting compensated for their creative work in a culture that

“...we must make an effort to resist turning to our devices instead of to each other.”

expects media to be free. And, what happens to journalism holding power accountable when our newspapers are in such significant decline? Not only that, but the vast majority of the activity online in the digital commons—our new “public sphere”—takes place on websites owned by a handful of corporations. Never have so few owned so much of our public space. Sherry Turkle reminds us in her book *Alone Together*, that we must make every effort to resist turning to our devices instead of to each other.<sup>3</sup>

To start, we need to explore how technology is reshaping our era so that we can apply it to long-standing community traditions. As we enter into a new technological age, we face great potential for the growth of the global digital commons and radical connectivity.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.gizmag.com/us-smartphone-penetration-passes-50-percent/23768/>

<sup>2</sup>Li, Charlene, and Josh Bernoff. *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business, 2008.

<sup>3</sup>Turkle, Sherry. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. New York: Basic, 2011.



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## Commons Creativity

1. Contribute knowledge from your area of expertise to online sharing networks, such as Wikipedia or open blogs.
2. When listening to music online, use programs that pay musicians, like Spotify or Pandora.
3. Visit [www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org) to learn how you can share your artwork, music and writing with the public.
4. Join an online Time Bank to share your time and skills with neighbors.



Susan Witt founded the E. F. Schumacher Society in 1980 and serves on the boards of the New Economics Institute, the Community Land Trust in the Southern Berkshires, and the BerkShares local currency program.

# Spinning for a Commons Economy

Susan Witt

## Land as Commons

On a shelf in the Library of the Berkshire office of the New Economics Institute, there is a small wooden box with a carrying handle—13 inches by 8 inches by 2 inches. It opens to reveal the parts of an apparatus for spinning cotton. Govindra Deshpande presented this traveling spinning wheel to our founder, Robert Swann, at a training seminar we organized in 1983.

Govindra told how he had walked with Vinoba Bhave, the spiritual successor to Gandhi, during the establishment of the Gramdan Villages of India. Vinoba was concerned with inequity in land distribution, which prevented the landless from constructing homes and earning a livelihood.



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A man works at a spinning wheel to provide for his local economy.

To address this concern, Vinoba journeyed from village to village on foot. When he arrived, the villagers would gather around him, so great was their reverence for this gentle man. Vinoba spoke to them as follows: “My brothers and sisters, those of you with more land than you can use, won’t you share that land with your brothers

and sisters who are in need?”

Inspired by his appeal, those with excess land would assign title to Vinoba, who in turn reassigned it to the poor. This practice was called “Bhoodan” or “Land Gift.” Much of India’s land was redistributed in this way, but without tools to work the land or capital to build, the land lay unused. The new owners sold their titles back to the

*“...our current economic system turns citizens into passive consumers rather than active participants and change makers.”*

wealthy, perpetuating the pattern of unequal distribution. So Vinoba initiated a new practice called “Gramdan” or “Village Gift.” The title to the land was transferred to the village itself, instead of to individuals, and then leased for productive use. If the lessee left the region, the use rights reverted to the village for redistribution. Many of India’s villages became Gramdan Villages, bringing about a peaceful land-reform initiative.

It was also the practice of Gandhians to engage in productive labor while holding meetings, thus setting an example for others. When arriving at a village, Vinoba and his followers would sit on the ground, open the cases of the spinning wheels they carried with them, assemble the parts, and spin. Gandhi taught that the spinning of cotton was both a symbol of, and practical step toward, freeing India from the economic oppression of Europe. The cotton was later woven into khadi cloth, a home-spun substitute for the silks and linen imports from Belgium and England.

## An Economy Based on Shared Values

The spinning wheel that Govindra gave Robert was the very same one that had been with him during his long walks with Vinoba. The gift honored Bob’s founding of the Community Land Trust movement in this country. Such initiatives for community land sharing are just one of multiple tools that modern day citizens can use to implement a new economy that meets social, environmental, and cultural criteria.

The complexity and abstractness of our current economic system turns citizens into passive consumers rather than active participants and change makers. In its simplest form, the economy is a place where human labor, organized by human ingenuity, transforms the natural world into products for use by others. That understanding frees citizens to imagine ways to shape the future of their local economy.

## Community Marketing, Financing, and Ownership

Community Supported Agriculture farms are growing in number, providing a way for their members to guarantee the yearly operating costs of the farmer, by paying in advance for a share of the harvest, thus eliminating marketing costs and uncertainty. A number of organizations in the Berkshire region of Massachusetts are now expanding that concept to Community Supported Industry by organizing volunteer teams for the planning, marketing, financing, and development of new import-replacement businesses

in the region, thereby encouraging social entrepreneurs, creating jobs, and keeping its youth from leaving for urban centers.

Local currencies like the BerkShares program in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, are providing a way for a community to identify and support their small, independent businesses, and bring back the face to face transactions that build community and trust.

In Cleveland, core institutions like the hospital and university, are contracting with the newly formed Evergreen Cooperative to process all their laundry. The scale of the institutional customer means a dependable volume of product, justifying the investment in modern energy and water saving equipment. This result is the establishment of a successful industry, good paying jobs, and hope for a blighted neighborhood.

### Citizens Engaged as Co-Producers

The assumed convenience of online shopping lures us away from our Main Streets to the

### *This common economy building takes more time...*

isolation of a computer screen. Conscious consumers want to know who makes the products they use in their homes, how were workers treated, what was the source of raw materials, how did the production practice affect the environment. They want to know the stories of the items they use in their daily lives. These are the stories that form and take life when citizens engage as co-producers in the economic process, sharing risk, sharing success, sharing in building a vibrant local economy, sharing in the multiple conversations that knit a community together.

This common economy building takes more time, but then I remember the Little Prince in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's story of the same name. The Prince is a visitor from another planet who meets a "merchant who sold pills that had been invented to quench thirst. You need only swallow

one pill a week, and you would feel no need for anything to drink."

"Why are you selling those?" asked the little prince.

"Because they save a tremendous

amount of time,' said the merchant. 'Computations have been made by experts. With these pills, you save fifty-three minutes in every week.'

'And what do I do with those fifty-three minutes?'

'Anything you like...'

'As for me,' said the little prince to himself, 'if I had fifty-three minutes to spend as I liked, I should walk at my leisure toward a spring of fresh water.'"

### Commons Advocacy

For decades the spinning wheel sat idle on the shelf in the Library, the wooden box closed, the pieces unassembled inside it. No one knew how to put it together or use it until in October of 2012 Ron Gaydos, a participant at the same 1983 event as Govindra Deshpande, came with a team to film a story on the new economy. Ron revealed that the Indian elder had taught him how to use the spinning wheel. "Do you remember how?" I asked. "Perhaps," said he.

I brought the spinning wheel from its shelf and unwrapped it. Ron's hands recalled what he had learned, and soon everyone in the office watched as the cotton spun. We laughed and cried at the same time, delighted by the serendipity that joined past with present, and moved by the long history of Commons advocacy represented by the small wooden case again in use. ~



### Freecycle

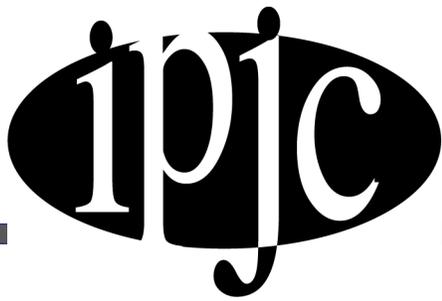
Don't throw away useful items—Freecycle them! In 2003 Deron Beal had a bed that he no longer wanted but discovered that none of the local thrift shops accepted beds. He started a network with a small group of friends and offered the bed in order to keep it out of the landfill.

The online network, now a nonprofit called Freecycle, has grown to over 9 million members in more than 110 countries, with thousands of new members being added weekly. This sharing commons community allows for members to post their unwanted things on an online list and to give and take items without cost. Over 32,000 items are given and received each day!

Find a community near you at: [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)

### Commons Creativity

1. Buy local when possible—visit [www.bealocalist.org](http://www.bealocalist.org)
2. Organize a Resilience Circle—[www.localcircles.org](http://www.localcircles.org)
3. Ask elected officials to protect the commons!
4. Call for the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center's *Just Economics*—a five session process for faith communities.



## Catholic Advocacy Day

Friday, March 22, 2013

Compassion & Justice for All

Email or call Catholic Community Services at DialogueForJust@ccsw.org or 206.328.5792 by **February 20, 2013**

Our Advocacy Focus will include:

- Housing
- Economic Justice
- Healthcare
- Environment

## Young Adult Justice Cafés—

### Upcoming Topics

Sustainable Living—January

Immigration—February

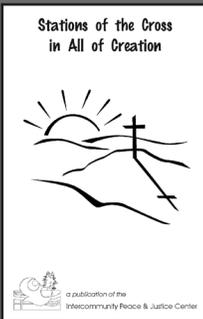
Culture & Diversity—March

Intergenerational Justice—April



## Care of Creation Lenten Stations

English ▪ Spanish ▪ French



Each Station includes:

- Scripture
- Stories
- Reflection Questions

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## Women's Justice Circles



Women light candles at the final Leadership Development workshop

## Western WA Leadership Development Workshops for Latinas were a great success!

Over 100 women from 25 cities in Washington were equipped with tools to improve their leadership and civic engagement skills.

Participants' experience:

*"Many thanks for the lessons learned. I hope to implement this injection of energy transmitted to us in these workshops ... I will recharge my light to go on in this noble mission that God has allowed me to start. I will continue to share the light that comes from my inner self, the light that is waiting to come out strong and warm for those in need."* Gabriela, Tacoma

*"Thank you for the beautiful and powerful experiences at the workshops..I realized that I am flourishing as ever. It was a very powerful insight. Now I am fully conscious of my power. I feel in complete synchrony with my body, mind, and leadership."* Jaqueline, Burien.

## Central Washington Latina Women's Leadership Workshops (En Español!)

**Saturday, February 23rd**

Topic: Secure Communities & Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

**Saturday, March 9th**

Topic: Domestic violence, sexual harassment in the fields, and labor rights.

**Location:** Sunnyside Community Center

1521 South 1st Street, Sunnyside, WA 98944

**Time:** 10:00am—12:00pm

## Thank You!

We are grateful to all who have contributed to make our IPJC Ministry possible. The following made donations in:

### In Memory Of

Maria Gri, CSJP—Cecilia Marie Gri, CSJP

Lucretia Way—Jack Morris, SJ

Dave Read—Margaret Read

Kerry & George Burrows—Mary Sullivan, OP

Helen Ting—Eliseo Ting

### In Honor Of

Joann Starr—Charlyne Brown, SNJM

Mary Thorne, CSJP—Susan Francois, CSJP

Jack & Maralyn Blume—Linda Haydock, SNJM

Margaret & Robert McArthur—Megan McArthur

Dominican West Chapter—2012 Jubilarians

# peace & justice center



*intercommunity peace & justice center*

## WOMEN'S CONVOCATION V

### Register Today!

- Mail in your registration form
- Register Online: [www.ipjc.org](http://www.ipjc.org)

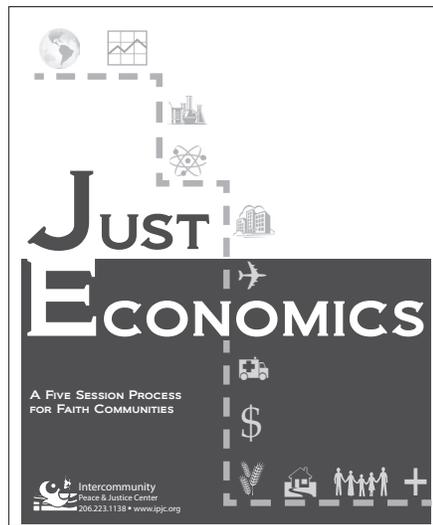
### Convocation Promotion

- Get extra brochures to share & post
- Be a parish liaison—call us
- Give us contacts for advertising in the program
- Provide us enough airmiles to bring a speaker (Approx. 50,000)

### NEW RESOURCE!

#### A five session process for faith communities

1. Biblical Economics
2. The Commons
3. The New Economy Movement
4. Taxes, Poverty and Wealth Gap
5. Simplicity and Sustainability



Download a sample session:  
Scan this QR code with your mobile phone!



#### Suggestions for Using *Just Economics* Booklets

- ☞ A parish or community small group
- ☞ An adult education program or series using the booklets
- ☞ A follow up to JustFaith, RCIA, or other program where a community has been formed
- ☞ Personal education and reflection

**Process includes** prayer, education, Catholic Social Teaching, analysis, discussion, signs of hope and action.

Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center • 1216 NE 65th St • Seattle, WA 98115

Price—\$5.00 (44 page booklet) **Sample session at [www.ipjc.org](http://www.ipjc.org)** • Contact IPJC for quantity discount [ipjc@ipjc.org](mailto:ipjc@ipjc.org) 206.223.1138

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Send me the following **Just Economics** Booklets:

Copies \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$5 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Postage\* \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\* (1=\$2, 2-7=\$3, 8-10=\$4 plus 1\$ for every 5 more)

## Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

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## Commons Glossary

**Capitalism 3.0:** An evolution of capitalism, in which the economy's operating system is redesigned to protect the commons. Taken from the title of a book by entrepreneur Peter Barnes.

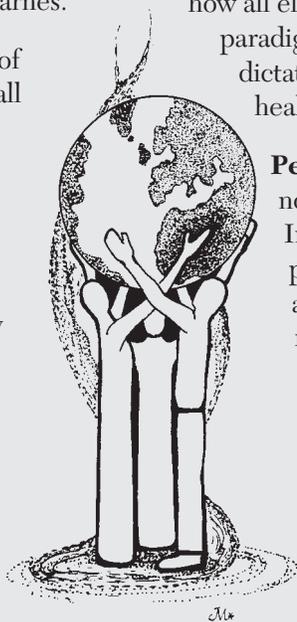
**Commons:** What we share. Creations of both nature and society that belong to all of us equally, and should be preserved and maintained for future generations.

**Commons paradigm:** A worldview in which reclaiming and expanding the commons is central to the workings of society. The goal is to assure the vitality of various commons, which in turn will boost economic, social, scientific and cultural advancement.

**Commons-based society:** A society whose economy, political culture and community life revolve around promoting a diverse variety of commons institutions and the basic principles of the commons. There is an important role for a flourishing economic market in a commons-based society, but its value is not treated as more important than the value of healthy commons.

**Creative Commons:** A nonprofit organization based in San Francisco that provides a series of free, public licenses that allow copyright holders to make their creative works legally available for copying, sharing and re-use.

**Market paradigm:** A worldview that holds up the workings of the marketplace not simply as an efficient economic tool, but as a moral code dictating how all elements of society should operate. The paradigm holds that the quest for profit should dictate all human endeavors from education to health care to the arts.



**Peer production:** A new mode of economic and cultural production on the Internet that enables large numbers of people to collaborate in the production and maintenance of shared information resources. Prominent examples include free software, Wikipedia, and the Flickr photo-sharing website.

**Privatize:** When a commons or other public service or asset becomes private property.

**Public assets:** Elements of the commons that are publicly owned and usually managed by a government body: parks, water utilities, public transit, libraries, schools, streets, etc.

**Public domain:** A body of creative and cultural works that are freely available for anyone to use, most often because the term of copyright protection for them has expired.

**Water Commons:** A longstanding ethic that water is no one's private property; it rightfully belongs to all of humanity and the earth and needs to be managed accordingly

source: <http://onthecommons.org/commons-glossary>

*A Matter of Spirit*  
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