Whole Cost (28)

We impact the world through the clothes we buy, the food we eat, the cars we drive, the way we dispose of our waste, and how we make a living or recreate. First, we must realize that amount on a price tag is rarely the "Whole Cost." Second, we must realize the Whole Cost of a good or service is educational as well as inspirational. It's important to publicize the "whole cost" of a product as well as the monetary price.

Often the price on the product obscures a sordid legacy that could include child labor, environmental abuse such as pesticides in ground water, air pollution or soil depletion, or aspects that are harder to quantify like migration of youth to the urban areas or loss of cultural heritage.

San Francisco was the first U.S. city to enact legislation requiring consideration of environmental and health implications when making purchases for the city. Since the city spends about $600 million every year, this type of legislation could conceivably have some effect.

Written by Douglas Schuler

Media Literacy (35)

Media literacy is the process of decoding and making sense of all media. It allows us to critically view media and to evaluate the role that media play in our lives. The primary objective of media education is not simply to foster critical awareness and understanding, but to develop awareness of our roles as active agents when engaged by all media, no matter the context.

Therefore, education that fosters media literacy needs to address the changing media environments. We need to perform more public media criticism. We need to engage with media more closely to keep them in check and to be informed as to how we are responding and why. We need to be more serious about our media environments and foster greater awareness of the impact and influence media systems have on daily life. We must arm all people with the knowledge, skills, and values a media education program provides – granting people access to new technology and information about its workings and ideological implication.

Finally, we need more alternative communication systems to counter these problems.

Written by Mark Lipton

Citizen Diplomacy (93)

The unique powers of individuals to help overcome rifts of antagonism between nations by calming tempers, building ties, promoting reason and dialogue, or healing wounds is rarely acknowledged or promoted. The use of the concept of "citizen diplomacy" was apparently first applied when US citizens journeyed to the former Soviet Union in the 1980s and met with activists, educators, scientists, health professionals and "ordinary" citizens. These citizens — and their Soviet counterparts — did not want to accept the "inevitability" of war and sought to find common ground on which to build a more peaceful future for everybody. Citizen diplomacy offers the promise of (world?) peace by building on actual, hopeful and optimistic face-to-face encounters by citizens of the designated enemy states.

People who engage in projects along these lines certainly fit Richard Falk's description of a "citizen pilgrim" who is willing to go on a quixotic journey for a seemingly improbable goal and therefore the citizen-diplomat may be well-advised that setbacks may outnumber the gains. Therefore, establish contacts and develop collaborative projects between individual citizens and groups in countries or regions where relations are severely strained or non-existent.

Written by Douglas Schuler

Online Anti-Poverty Community (103)

Anti-poverty advocates and activists are isolated in their own communities. Because they often do not have the communications and education and training resources they need to do their work, their opportunities for building communities are severely limited.

Poor and otherwise marginalized people do not have the information they need to exercise control over their lives and get the resources to which they are entitled or to advocate effectively for themselves. The anti-poverty community need communications networks to further their involvement in organizing for social change locally, nationally and internationally.

The most effective online anti-poverty communities are constructed from the bottom up rather than the top down. Their resources are defined and created by advocates and poor people to address the need for online activism as it arises. Electronic resources can provide additional tools, but they are activated and made useful by the underlying human and locally-based networks where the advocacy work is actually being done.

Written by Penny Goldsmith