Fair Trade (21)

Around the globe, production, trade and retailing of most goods and services are increasingly concentrated under the control of a few corporations. Fair Trade associations made up of fair trade wholesalers, retailers, producers, and consumers are needed to foster a more equitable and sustainable system of production and trade that benefits people and their communities. Fair Trade means that trading partnerships are based on reciprocal benefits and mutual respect; that prices paid to producers reflect the work they do; that workers have the right to organize; that national health, safety, and wage laws are enforced; and that products are environmentally sustainable and conserve natural resources.

The rapidly growing Fair Trade movement is setting standards that could redefine world trade and, if adopted by the big players in the global economy, could play a big part in reversing the growing inequities and environmental degradation that have accompanied the growth in world trade.

Written by Burl Humana and Anna Nakana

Sustainable Design (22)

Human welfare depends on using the Earth's physical resources, material cycles, and biological processes, but current human techniques, understanding, decision-making, and perceptions of need are blind to their destructive effects on these essential functions of the Earth. The reverse is also a problem: current attempts to protect the Earth are often blind to how they influence human welfare.

Consider each building or product as a double intervention—in the Earth's cycles and processes, and simultaneously in the human cultural needs and techniques. Make use of available understanding, innovative and traditional, natural and social, to gauge the proper balance of human and non-human effects for each intervention. Remember that present culture builds from work of the past, and future culture will have to build from what the present provides. The ethic of Sustainable Design is not only that future existence should be possible, but that it should exhibit justice and beauty for humans and for the rest of nature.

Written by Rob Knapp

Anti-Racism (23)

Efforts toward creating a desirable society continue to be hindered by unquestioned privilege, fear, and prejudice across race, caste, and ethnic divisions. The historical legacy of long-maintained racial divides and inequalities continue to affect any organization attempting to create a more just and sustainable society, even when racism is not the primary issue that an organization or movement wants to address. As with gender divisions, race, caste, and class hierarchies often intertwine to erode the effectiveness of organizations and their communication, especially when patterns of privilege and bias go unnoticed.

This pattern has two major dimensions: Anti-Racism through awareness and Anti-Racism through action. Only by recognizing racism (personal and institutional) and actively challenging it, can we hope to overcome the racial divisions that inhibit effective problem solving and weaken progressive movements. An anti-racist orientation to social change can help organizations successfully challenge policies and practices that mask power, exploitation, and resource grabbing behind the guise of liberal individualism and national interests.

Written by Lori Blewett

Spiritually Grounded Activism (24)

Some social change agendas and strategies are derived from sacred texts, religious doctrines and traditional spiritual practices. Grounding one's public engagement this way can lead to productive and insightful action but such efforts are often highly charged. Contemporary societies vary widely in how well they receive such initiatives — a martyr to one group will seem like a dangerous radical to another. Intermingling politics and religion can taint both, leading to false piesies in politics and making mundane the prayers and rituals which were originally spiritual in purpose. By all means ground your own work in the values, the mysteries and the heritage of a religious community. At the same time, hesitate to judge others whose motives and practices are different. If secular values justify and guide your actions assume the best of those driven to act by religious convictions and likewise, if you are religious, give credence to the secular. Remember that ritual, sacred or secular, can strengthen bonds among organizers and provide the respite necessary to keeping on with the work of change.

Written by Helana Mayer-Knapp