

Confessions of Success

When I signed up for the The Peace Project, initiated by the Whole Nine Yards, in LA., I was asked to write about what this meant to me which meant I needed to put my commitment to this noble cause in line with all the other noble causes I have been involved in. This particular noble cause, The Peace Project, Sierra Leone, has been launched by Lisa Shultz with a modest enough agenda: she aims to provide war-ravaged victims in Sierra Leone with crutches, wheelchairs and prosthetics by September 21st 2011, World Peace Day. The 'Blood Diamond' war left ten thousand disabled because it was a policy of marauding forces to lop off limbs to frighten the people into submission. These are people need a hand, literally, and they seem forgotten now by news media who are now busy reporting the *latest* disasters. As Lisa points out, if one man alone could get Peace Day on the Global Calendar, what could a community of people achieve? We set out to achieve and are still in the process of fund raising. Some of my friends have contributed but there are some to whom these tragedies are simply overwhelming. They take me aside and tell me how many tragedies there have been lately. There was the 2005 Tsunami, followed by Louisiana's Katrina, and after that Haiti, and this year Japan's Nuclear Disaster, and the flooding of the Mississippi continues, not to mention our sympathy for the entire middle east. I could see the CNN footage as they read me the tragic list but what was more disturbing was the sound of despair. 'Perhaps the Apocalypsists are right', someone said. Shocked there is even a name for these people, I heard the disabling done by

news media coverage or simply watching too much news media coverage. Some of my friends have lost more than limbs, they have lost hope, their voices, their peace of mind.

I am an ordinary Joe or Jane if you will, who does not risk her life for the causes she embraces even though she admires, almost to the point of hero-worship, those who do. But I'd like to share my doubts about the recent trend in support for Causes which have stopped being social occasions and have been reduced to clicks on an automated e-mail. I admit this is an important form of petitioning, protest and donation and long may it continue to grow, but I am more and more convinced that *easily given easily forgotten*. Those worthy (and unworthy) organizations may keep a track of our gift-giving but do we keep tabs on the ones we donate to? Do we really learn anything from that 'click'? I feel I am getting less and less for my money, until I feel just a cog in the non-profit machine. What is the solution?

Lisa Shultz began her work for Sierre Leone by not being interested in charity but art. She runs an art gallery, The Whole Nine Yards, in Culver City, California. It was her human reaction to the startling black and white photography of the photo-journalist, Pep????? that inspired her to visit that country. Now before she went there she already had an online community of artists, to whom she blogged. She had created a community online with people with similar interests, wanting to exhibit their talent, and contribute to world peace. When we comment and reply to her blog, we are communicating with people we have never met but with whom we share

ideals. This is like my experience of marching with groups of strangers, most of whom I will never see again. The important thing is to recognize the importance of doing just that small thing, communicating. Lisa went and reported back, and got us involved to the point of 'adopting' a child there who was from a family with amputees or an amputee themselves. Adopting can be a fearful sounding process but we all understood it meant limited support, the kind everyone can afford, to put these children through school. Non-profit agencies do not promise education, and their resources are strained not only by the war but the famines in both East and West Africa. Because we trusted her, we trusted her process.

Even while we click away and donate our meagre amounts, we know there is a lot of hard work going on that we can only guess at through her comments. Fund raising is hard work, and like any other project it is hugely competitive. But I firmly believe that it is the groundswell of public opinion that eventually goads governments into improving conditions. Today that groundswell has to come from participation on the Net, and not just from donating a small amount to the NGO of your choice but by getting involved in a small group, knowing peoples names, charting their journies online and messaging each other to further the Message. And when we become sufficiently comfortable and there are sufficient numbers of us, then we can meet in each other's homes and plot and plan away like in the old days. It is this step that I think is missing, the leap from the 'click' to the pressing of flesh at the 'meeting'. Naturally distrust runs high, but in political activism it

always did. You have to be discerning, check out people's places of work and be accompanied when you visit someone's home if you have simply contributed to their funds on the Net. Distrust has to be replaced with confidence in your ability to choose your causes, plead your cause and be effective. I am happy to take part in Lisa's Peace Project, (www.thepeaceproject.com) because I know I have to do more on a personal level. I know this is the only way to feeling good about giving, participating and succeeding. Up close and personal worked for me in the past, and I'm sure it will with this organization.

I was a 'demonstration virgin' when the Women's Movement began. My first march, from Boston Common via the State House to the campus of Boston University where we rallied outside the chapel, a spot dedicated Martin Luther King, took place in 1969. Before Feminism became a household word. I had been tempted to march against the Bomb, and against the war in Vietnam, but Women's Rights pushed me over the edge, into action. Maybe I was afraid of bonding with strangers in the streets. I recognize it as a giant step for some young women. But at least I knew the strangers were going to be women, and because it was such a successful experience I became, if not a constant protester, certainly an eager and energetic one.

That march was kept alive with the song, 'Give Me Bread and Give Me Roses', first sung by textile workers, mostly women,

in Lawrence, Mass. in 1912. They demanded not only better pay but more dignity. *They won both.* Bread and Roses, the very words, still say a lot to me and in my research I found a restaurant of that name in Ho Chi Minh City. Fitting my brief, another symbol of *an unlikely cause triumphantly won.*

Back in the days, I never imagined our marches for women's rights *would change things that much.* The Second Wave, which was rather a poor title for the new women's movement, spawned a few badly written give-aways until it inspired Gloria Steinham to scale great heights with Ms., but at the time it seemed to me a sophomoric attempt for equal pay, more dignity, less harassment. That was my middle-class prejudice, but you can march for a cause you believe in even though you only half understand its true worth. My son innocently asked me the other day, 'weren't women always priests?' when I mentioned our local vicar was a woman. No, in those days Mary Daly had yet to publish her book on the female God, and 'Her' had no worked its way into the language. It all happened in a surprisingly few number of years. And marching for women's rights had an effect not only socially but for me personally. As a philosophy student I began to change every pronoun I came across in the tomes of great philosophers, which resulted in me rejecting the subject entirely.

What was hard to measure in those early days was the extent to which our cause reached the so-called masses. You just know it makes you feel good. How many times have loved ones sighed, you'll never make a difference. *Well, thank you, we have, won both pay increases,*

dignity and visibility. Although the Equal Pay Act was passed by John F Kennedy in 1963 , I think it was mainly motivated to equal pay between the races, but I cannot say he did not also believe it would affect women. It is true that equal pay for equal work or Title VII is still 15% from 100% achievement, but this is amazing progress. Women have, by commitment to themselves and their interests achieved a total increase of 35% since 1963. *Thank you, I'll take it.* And the Second Wave, however it small it seemed at the time, can definitely be thanked for Title IX, the real gender equity law passed in 1972, which affected sports and educational institutions. *We won more than equal rights for equal pay, we won the dignity of sporting achievements and visibility on television.*

How does it make you feel? If you ask that question of yourself as you champion a cause you will soon find out it not only feels good at the time, but *it feels increasingly good throughout time as change is gradually effected.* Dare I say it? Exponentially. It certainly changes your behavior. I started to write plays from a woman's point of view; always tried to buy female authors along with male; supported conscious-raising groups, one of which wrote the book, "Our Bodies Our Selves". *We not only won rights for our sex but the right to sex.* A very happy outcome from my point of view, for not very much time and effort involved. Of course I know I am a side-liner and women have devoted their entire lives and sacrificed much for the cause, but I am urging for simple support here, the kind you could and should do in your spare time. I would not have classed myself, at that time, as

a political activist. I thought that was for die-hard socialists who met weekly and read Marx and Lenin. At a landmark meeting in Boston, at the height of the women's movement, there was a terrible split between us when the Socialists took aim at middle-class women who were accused of settling for 'better conditions' instead of radical change. In turn they were accused of standing beside their men, rather than going out on a limb. They were accusing us of not being revolutionary enough but we pointed out that they were still supporting their men. They had not introduced feminism into the home, into the bedroom. So there was a split, the radicals walked. Shocking though it seemed that night, this meeting went publically unrecorded as far as I know. I do vividly remember an imposing African-American woman taking the podium, during which she said, "I am not going to sit down, to make my man look like he's standing tall." Which I think, says it all, and brings me to my next experience of success.

The Civil Rights Movement is such a mother of a movement it is difficult for someone to relate to it personally, but if you are to contribute to a movement at all this is just what you try to do. The Civil Rights Movement is especially difficult to feel part of by someone not raised African American. But the human spirit, thankfully, knows no borders. I certainly did not, age twelve, when I read Frank Yerby's, "The Foxes of Harrow" and "The Vixens". They arrived with the generic cover of my Aunt's Best Selling Books' Club and blew me away. I must have been ready

for the stories of plantation slavery and he made me feel them like no historical novel has done before or since. I had no idea his heritage was African American, or what that meant.

Although I had not reached the stage of 'marching' then, thanks to reading Yerby, I did keep tabs on the Civil Rights movement and celebrated when JFK enabled the Civil Rights and Voting Acts (1964), which did not mean that fear went away or that the right to vote was ever considered by those not able to defend themselves. But I was a scared little girl, too scared to take the Civil Rights Buses to the South, although some of my friends did. Maybe they had not read Frank Yerby and the KKK was just a boogie myth to them. I did go to Resurrection City in late May 1968: more of a visitor more than a protester, it was still a mind-bending experience. Martin Luther King's death threats had convinced him earlier that year that he did not have long to live so he was prepared to go for broke, 'to raise non-violent protest to a new level', in a way that would include all races, culminating in Solidarity Day, June 19th 1968.

King was assassinated in April, but his 'War on Poverty' still took place in May and June of that fateful year. It was not a sit-in, it was a live-in: it was a 'happening'. Between three and five thousand people camped out at the capital, and we can only imagine the strength of those bonds that were forged during those two months and the minds that were altered, not forgetting the minds of thousands of university students across the country. I can only say that even to-day just the two words, Resurrection City, bring

tears to my eyes. In aerial photos Resurrection City looks contained within the parkland, in fact it sprawled delightfully throughout residential boroughs taking advantage of every sidewalk and patch of grass. My visit was at the beginning, in mid-May, so there was still an air of hope and freshness that I believe degenerated later on with the tragedy of Robert F. Kennedy's assassination. The fact the City was able to be erected at all was due to the leniency of Robert F Kennedy as District Attorney, protecting the poor's right to protest in Washington, DC. , the nation's capital.

It did not rain while I was there, so the mud was still to come, but I do remember the smell because the raw sewage had to be collected in pails and carried to nearby drains. I'm not sure some of those pails were not also used to carry water back for cooking and washing. There were no porta-toilets. But it was a human mess that everyone knew would be gone once the camp was dismantled. We also sensed that the human spirit would linger on generated by that huge rush of initiative and energy that moved poverty stricken people to build and erect A-frame houses and shacks in a relatively short time to demonstrate the fact that they knew how to live on the edge because that's how they lived back home.

Visitors like myself came to marvel at that fact and to take away a lesson in humility, but what perhaps we were not prepared for was the lesson in nobility. To begin with they had the assurance of morality on their side, they had the dignity of a people in search of justice, and they had a beloved leader's words (now that he was dead) to quote, '*the*

arc of moral universe is long but it always bends towards justice!. They held his photograph to hold close to their hearts. The majority of Americans worried about their mortgages had less psychic strength and certainly less valuable goals. That gathering of the poor of all races were determined to shame not only the affluent in Washington but foreign diplomats and ambassadors, many of whom were avoiding the poor in their own countries. The fact that the Republic of America was allowing this protest was a point in its favor and one we could all enjoy. Their commitment shone on their faces and was reflected in ours.

Resurrection City was doomed with the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, on June 6th. It did not take the new order long to bring in the bulldozers on June 24th and raze it to the ground. An element of despair and wretchedness followed those terrible events in which all the nation shared. *That sharing itself cannot be underestimated.*

The cortège of Robert F. Kennedy went right through the heart of Resurrection's City in more ways than one honoring the place in time and space. It is still referred to in visitors tour guide books. Of course the stories and history of the Civil Rights Movement (so-called) is the subject of many volumes and fascinating web-sites, so I will not bother to list names and places except in so far as I was personally moved and changed by these events.

Accepting the confessions of Malcolm X was an example. For a feminist to accept a convicted rapist as someone to read and absorb, was like the sky had opened up and angels singing to me in African dress. Another example of

the revolution *within me* and I was not alone in being changed and challenged by hearing Martin Luther King sing 'We shall overcome' . This is now sung in nursery school, second only to the national anthem. *This is what I call success.* The Civil Rights Revolution was certainly not an unsung revolution. Music was at the heart of it.

In 1820 a simple 'black-faced' song caused the mindless fears that resulted in the cruel Jim Crow laws. Jim Crow was a mocking song that became popular as early as 1820. But as any actor will tell you, what you mock properly, you have to understand and respect properly. Inspired by the singing of a crippled ex-slave, Jim Crow was a hit. It could be called the first ever pop-music hit, influenced by the African Beat. It was everywhere, and was actually mistaken for the American National Anthem in Mexico. It was the mindless fear that this music, this 'message' was, in fact, the start of the true American revolution. Immediately, there was militant reaction by white racists, which still bears his name. From then on music was the guns and ammunition of this revolution, music was its cannons and its guillotine through Spirituals, Gospel Music, Ragtime, Jazz, Blues, (and I hate to say, The Black And White Minstrels), Mo Town, right up the path of Beat Poets and Rap to the heart of Michael Jackson.

In retrospect, I think it was the closest American have ever come to a real revolution. That is, a spontaneous uprising of its people. The fact that those

people were not 'white' has, I believe, prevented this revolution from 'being televised' and committed to history as the only true American revolution it was although I can already hear grumblings from the 'old white guard'. Surely, the so-called American revolution was simply a colonial war in which the country was liberated from a foreign oppressor. A real revolution takes place among the people of a country, some of whom are forced to act out and to speak out against oppression. The Civil Rights Movement was more than that. It was, to my mind, the Civil Rights Revolution. The fact that a revolution takes so long, more than two centuries, does not mean it is not also a bloody one. The lists of those who died in that revolutionary war, from even before the Civil War, have still to be engraved *in total* on a Washington Monument. The lives sacrificed for this revolution still have to be honored for what they were, soldiers of the revolution. But I have no doubt that will eventually happen, a sculpture will be commissioned and *the success of that long fought war and final revolution will be celebrated as it was, in a way, by that well-televised walk down Pennsylvania Avenue by President Barak and first lady, Michelle Obama*

While the Civil Rights Revolution, which after all had been going on since the 1800's, continued unabated, gathering momentum, the anti-war movement followed in its footsteps, taking foot-notes from Reverend Martin Luther King on how to conduct a non-violent protest. The violence, as is

usually the case, was on the other side both in drafting young men to fight an undeclared war and at Kent State firing on those who opposed it. It was a strange few years, that we like to think of as an era. No more than four or five years, precious few in comparison to Civil Rights protests but unlike those, it did antagonize the military and brought out the tanks. I saw armored tanks amassing in Harvard Square: soldiers with rifles peering uneasily down on their fellow citizens. This reaction, however, does not make it a revolution. It was only ever a civil rebellion against one particular undeclared war, the commitment of troops to aid the government of South Vietnam, mostly to guard the elite of Saigon. Although an undeclared war, the entire House voted for Military Engagement and the entire Senate, except for two democratic Senators, voted for it. The government sold it as the Last Stand for Capitalism versus Communism, which folly and madness persuaded a great many people to embrace the Socialist Workers Party, myself among them as long as the war lasted.

When Buddhist monks were setting fire to themselves to protest the occupation, it seemed the least I could do. And not only Buddhist monks, the outrage among Americans was keenly felt by thinking people who for the first time were at odds with their government and experiencing the terrible feeling of helplessness that can overwhelm the unprepared. Alice Herz was equally outraged as the Buddhist monks at the betrayal of her country, and at the age of eighty-two set fire to herself to protest the way against Vietnam and died in hospital a few days later.

I think her action expressed how cowed we all were at the challenge facing us. How to end a war from within? How to convince five star generals that life is not about 'saving face'? *It seemed a monumental task.* We did not, as in some of the other causes, have the law on our side. Our objectives were precise and clear but our targets, the CIA, the President, the government and the military combined, seemed insurmountable obstacles to peace. People often refer to the 60's and 70's as a time of high jinks, a carnival atmosphere, but Dropping Out was not like that. Those who went the whole way gave up middle-class life to join the poverty train and live on the edge like the poor. It was their form of immolation and I am thankful so many did survive the fire and came right back. I do not think this meant they betrayed their principals. The war ended and they returned from despair and depression, relieved of these negative emotions. I do not think it a co-incidence that Affirmative Action, assertiveness training, the How to Improve Ourselves decade followed after Flower Power. When you turn your back on a consumer society, you discover yourself. And you discover Free Love. The one thing they have not been able to tax. Free love was also an added inducement to join up with the outmoded Marxists and trotskyites, and left-wing socialists. All three were having a field day with the rebellion against the war in Vietnam. I think it was the last gasp of American communism.

The history of American communism is a brief and boring one, unless you read the biography of Josephine Herbst. The passionate lives of those involved have to be invoked, as well as their commitment to fairness in trade

(something we accept today) and support of labor unions, the well-known International Workers of the World, and the particularly American Farm Workers Union. There was intellectual support for the Left in the United States exemplified by the glamorous John Reed club, and this lasted through the twenties and thirties. 'The New York Post' was leftist, the 'New Republic' obviously so, but the Communist Party which seemed able to cope with the Stalin era and the Depression but not with the economic boom after World War Two and the attacks by Senator McCarthy. Their Fourth Estate has now dribbled down to the 'Daily Worker', which seems almost a cartoon version of its former self. But the groundswell of leftist thinking in the Vietnam era proved deeper than was what was visible on the surface, probably strengthened by the McCarthy attacks and the corruption of their well-conceived but carelessly crafted Trade Unions, a public ally acclaimed success but a source of disillusionment for most party members. Distaste for the military involvement in Vietnam motivated those children of the post-war children to view the Left as a home-away-from-home, now that their country seemed embarked on embarrassingly fascistic tactics, not only in Korea and Vietnam but even more importantly across the entire continent of South America.

Of course many anti-war protesters had not even heard of Marx and Lenin, but attending Boston University (Martin Luther King's alum), I was not one of them. I was not 'nor have I ever been' a communist. I was a socialist, so my membership was not scrutinized by the police (or so I thought)

and membership was a casual affair. To begin with I noticed the marches were different from other marches, they were much better organized.

Organization was the Left's strong point. Well I should think so, considering how many meetings they scheduled. Or it may have been to encourage 'comrades' to 'bond' with each other out during the night. I felt there was a lot of behind-the-scenes scheming in the organizing and I was proved right when I was invited to the Marxist inspired 'cells' that existed across America as well as in the basements of Manhattan. We were given Hegel's *Dialectics* and Lenin to read and quickly learned to tell the difference between an American Marxist and an American Trotskyite. These committed *cadre* members fully expected the Left would be able to seize power due to the enormous dissatisfaction with the war in Vietnam, take control of the government like the Bolsheviks did after World War I, and join forces with Cuba. Cuba was a secret buzzword, whispered in politely conventional society, but dear to the hearts of many leftist Americans. Of course as Marxist they should have been warned by Jane Fonda's much publicized and despised visit to Hanoi. That was quintessential protest-against-the-war, not at all a symbol of Marxist idealism. And all power to her. It took great courage to stand up both to Government and Hollywood; *hers is a big success story*. Jane Fonda was branded as a traitor, although she was never charged as such. In my modest, comfortable way, which I urge on all others, I did my bit and kept within the law. I would like to say I ran risks but I did not, to my knowledge. I was pure *lumpen proletariat*. I still think the

capitalist system, for all its taxes, leads to obscene disparity of personal wealth and power, especially true in today's era of investment bankers and web-based billionaires, no matter how altruistic. And I do still believe the capitalist ethic has to be regulated: rampant capitalism is bad for the planet. That does not make me a communist or even, in to-day's more liberal era, a socialist.

My comrades back then may have been preparing for a Communist led America, but the majority of us were merely rebelling against the seemingly invincible government and doing whatever was in our power to protest legally, without being branded as a traitor and sent to Guantanamo Bay. By then I had read Rachel Carson but we were far from marching in the streets to save the planet, like I did in London or marching against our food production like I did against Genetically Modified Foods, but the simplest soul knows war is not good for us or the planet. The Vietnam War, like all wars, was a terrible waste of resources from the destruction of natural and human habitat and pollution to the actual casualties both human and animal. That much was obvious, but how to convince those power-mongers?

How did 'we' end the war? We did! *It was the biggest of my success story experiences and I have to go over and over the factors that contributed to that success.* How did we ever get our politicians 'in line' and, without shooting them, make them reverse themselves? In discovering this, we may be able to use the tactic again. The general consensus of opinion was that it was

less Marxism than the influence of the media. The uncensored war was on television, we digested it every night with our evening meal. Journalists, both television and French, have to be thanked, a few of whom lost their lives in the cause. The Year of Living Dangerously does not scratch the surface of what was suffered in the cause of justice, which is just another word for truth. They took on more than a job, they compassionately shouldered the burden of suffering civilian and military war victims. And to quote the Bible, because I do not want to exclude any moral sources, 'those that carry the greatest burden, know the greatest truth.'

Thanks to them, the war was in our living rooms: every housewife was in on its facts and figures. We were there. Which is how the mirror is held up to corrupt and guilt-ridden leaders. It is a kind of media-led democracy, the Fourth Estate edges towards the First, because it is changing people's minds, minds and hearts. This is why the disappearance of journalists in Russia today, 2011, should be considered a serious threat to the globe. The accurate and constant dissemination of information indirectly led to the withdrawal of military troops and it is something the West can take pride in, but *how did that actually change the minds of those in power?* After all, Martha Mitchell was easily dismissed? What was the final push on the backs of our leading politicians, to enable the media to effectively end the war?

To begin with the military decided to adopt the above slogan. We were then told, 'we are in Vietnam to change people's minds and hearts'. That was the beginning of the end, when they had to adopt that dyed-in-the-wool-of-

democracy phrase because no one believes you do that with guns and bombing? And then there was the increasing demand from the public that their leaders 'lose face' because it was obvious with the 'secret' bombing of Cambodia, they had already lost it. Operation Menu (what a name for a military operation, it kind of says it all) was Kissinger and Nixon's brainchild, and a notable military failure as well as a cultural disaster. In other words, the military engagement went from bad to worse. The nation watched, critically, as our leaders lost their 'credibility', a term coined especially for their incredible stupidity and which, unfortunately, was not limited to 'our' involvement in Asia. Operation Condor, was in action throughout the Vietnam war and although I personally was not marching against it, many Americans were. A lethal plan to assassination socialist and communist sympathizers throughout Latin America. A figure of sixty thousand deaths have been attributed to this Operacion Condor. We still do not know to what extent Nixon and Kissinger were involved, but they definitely if clandestinely supported it. I could say without fear of contradiction, it was a low point in American politics, *a depression that was increasingly shared by greater and greater numbers of people.*

At the beginning of 1973 no one knew how it would end, when it suddenly did. There was the Paris Accord, and *later in the same year* Henry Kissinger (who advised the bombing of Cambodia) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. I see those two events as inextricably linked. Imagine a socialite like Kissinger, who was unaffectionately named Henry (Manipulative)

Kissinger, trying to wash his slate clean. He had a problem if he was ever going to remain in circulation and here is where world leadership is an advantage. He is on the list of attendees of the Bilderberg Group since 1957, he attended in 1971 and 1973, and it is my contention that at one of their meetings, he made a deal with the Nobel Prize Committee that he would instigate the withdrawal of American forces if he was awarded the Nobel Prize, thus allowing him once again entrance into decent people's lives. The Bilderberg group was formed with the idea of making Europeans like Americans more and the Vietnam War was hated in Europe. I think the Nobel committee made a deal with him, withdraw and we will give you the Peace Prize. Or what is more likely, given his character, he made a deal with them. If you give me the Peace Prize, I will tell Nixon to withdraw. To my mind, there is no other explanation. Although he was not able to silence sincere critics by accepting that prize, he was certainly entered again into the lists of polite society. As a continuing if moderate political activist, I am anxious to note: a) the importance such prizes have and the sway that groups have in bargaining b) the importance of polite society to a law abiding citizen in a democracy, c) the ability of peaceful but visible protest, with the help of the media, to gain influence, especially abroad. His critics, all of whom had less information and education than he did, were ultimately able to change the mind of Nixon's principal advisor. *If success came to the anti-war movement it was for a number of reasons. The Marchers can believe they succeeded because their voices would not be silenced, the power elite can take a somewhat*

laughable credit, but I do not think we should discount those Buddhist monks. After the war was over, Buddhist centers opened in every major American city and are still going strong. The dignity of non-violent protest has increased.

What a blissful silence it was at the end of the Vietnam war. The whole country veered left. Democracy had triumphed and that triumph dealt such a hard blow to the American Left that I believe it still lies in the dirt. I, for one, was happy that I could stop going to endlessly boring cell meetings. Short-sightedly, I must confess, because Operation Condor was still throttling those who championed the poor and underprivileged in South America. President Allende had still to be betrayed and brought down. But you cannot fight on all fronts at once and the grim reality of the continuing need for social engineering, ignited by the Women's Movement, was pointed up by the Pro-Choice Movement. Again, it does seem easier to recruit from those whose lives are personally touched and adversely affected by unfair laws. Nothing is so intimate as control over your own body. That was what attracted such numbers to both the Pro-Choice Movement and the Gay Rights Movement. No doubt when our healthy bodies sicken from famine, drought or nuclear radiation will be when and only when we start marching in the streets for a sustainable planet. It is hard to protest disasters to come.

The Pro-Abortion movement was dealing with present day disasters.

That was before the name change. Pro-life got our name changed to the Pro-Choice. From the beginning it was a serious struggle between two deeply entrenched points of view. One for the sanctity of life in whatever form and the other for the right of a woman to control what happens to her own body. At the beginning of this struggle, I respected the point of view of the opposition. A playwright friend of mine, G.I. Horton, wrote a penetrating play called 'Choices', commissioned by a disillusioned member of staff who worked in one of the now-legal clinics. She knew that Ms. Horton was on the other side and thought between them they could come up with a truthful report. The range of reasons why women seek abortions was unexpected, the nature of them, distressing. It seemed a necessary evil, such a necessary evil that when it was brought into the public's awareness, doctors and scientists set to finding an alternative. To-day we have the morning-after pill, and the male contraceptive pill, but then it was grimsville.

My most vivid impression was the symbol some of us carried on all marches and demonstrations, a wire metal coat-hanger. This ordinary domestic item that had been used with disastrous effects to end not only a pregnancy but a woman's life, and on more than one occasion, had great impact on everyone who saw it and that means not only those people skirting the demonstration, but those who saw it taken to and from on every form of public transportation including a commercial jet-liner. Our slogan was, 'NEVER AGAIN', and we were prepared to back it up. It is a hard fact for the human race to accept, but an unwanted pregnancy can drive a woman

to the brink of madness and we were determined to show that it often happened. All women experience child bearing and childbirth as a mind bending experience and even wanted pregnancies can drive some sensitive souls over the edge. Forced pregnancy and childbirth was, in our minds, an avoidable horror. We were supported eventually by the logs of the police department when they suddenly discovered a reduction in the crime rate they traced to Family Planning.

It is hard to imagine now a time before Roe versus Wade although there is still religious opposition to the Pro-Choice Movement, but to my mind, the opposition undermines itself constantly. While seeming to have a strong moral stance their position is tenuous. To begin with they are not Jains, who respect the life the tiniest beetle (or annoying gnat), they are not even vegetarians and when they go to the extreme of killing doctors they become wholesale murderers. But consistency is not required for one-off convictions or even logic for that matter. Some of our opponents on this sensitive issue we have respect for, but I believe the absolute arrogance of the opposition helped *us to win this war.*

I cannot say I was among the first who marched for Gay Rights but I was always a silent supporter. Which means I do not feel as proud as I should have been had I marched originally. *Yes, I should have gone on these marches too, to feel the happiness I found by marching on others.* For this movement I have been more of an onlooker, but I have always supported the cause. A group of

forty men and women, who were used to greeting each other in their Gay Bar, met to change the world and began a demonstration in front of the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. *Forty is not a huge number if you think of the changes that were to come. It is a huge success story.*

“But of course same sex couples must marry,” Dorothy Sayers quipped in the 1950's, “think of the children!” A joke back then, in 2011 we are faced with exactly that dilemma when same sex couples, who have children, split. It was not until 2003 that the U.S Supreme Court ruled for the legality of homosexual relations, but now we do have to protect the children with laws that sanction coupledness, ie. gay marriages. State by state they are gradually becoming legal and in 2010 President Obama signed a law to allow gays and lesbians to serve in the U.S.military. And yet homosexual relationships were not even legal in the privacy of your own home until the landmark decision of *Lawrence v. Texas* in 2003. *They won*, but it is sad that the success of the Gay Rights Movement relied so heavily on the nature of AIDS.

Because I worked in the theater I was acutely aware of this as my talented colleagues disappeared from the scene. In my opinion, the epidemic wrought such havoc to the theatrical profession that it has yet to recover from the dimming of its brightest lights and death of its upcoming stars. To take on such an onslaught and make of it something political relevant and enormously coherent takes a special kind of faith. Roger McFarlan an early advocate of Gay Men's Health Crisis brought the terrible ignorance of the disease to the attention of straight society, and its virtual denial by the

American medical establishment. The Stonewall riots in 1969 only raised a few eyebrows, the real heavy work of campaigning for social acceptance and health protection was done afterwards and the *development of the Pink Vote has proved how important and successfully that campaigning was.*

Gay men and women rallied together and the results were huge. The Lesbian Gay Bi-sexual and Transsexual flag has become a source of national pride. The LGBT rainbow flag was even used by a number of groups throughout South America who are now advocating a 'race unida'. Children growing up to-day will not remember a time when there was not a Gay Parade, Gay Pride Day, week, month, or year even. Okay, I did not go on the marches but you cannot keep me from the parade. They are the most joyful I've ever been on. Music, costumes, lights. How wonderful to think it was never a case of 'send lawyers, guns and money'. *That in itself, is a surefire mark of Gay Rights ultimate success. It is FUN!*

I am now involved with a group who are advocating a Trouser Free environment. In all good conscience I have to support these men. Didn't women risk life and limb to wear trousers in public? Despite some lip service to the idea given by fashion, it is still far from a realized dream. The conventions of fashion and the intolerance for deviations makes it one of our most suppressive art forms.

There is a post-Marxist saying. Revolutions create new Markets.

But it may take a long time for those markets to be appreciated, respected and decently pursued. One case in point is the case of Iran. When I was first introduced to the seething disrespect your thinking Iranian had for what I presumed to be a 'monarch' I had to have a lesson in Oil Cartel Politics and again, the nefarious CIA who put the presumed 'shah' on the throne.

A puppet placed there to ensure our 'right' to buy Iranian oil, his secret police, the Savak, were the scourge of all Iranian students. You could be tortured for having a questionable text book on your desk. This was barely acknowledged in the West due to the Shah's (and his western advisor's) control of Public Relations. PR is something that protesters fear most of all. How many times have I been to marches (especially against the war in Iraq) that were several *hundred* thousand stronger than reported in the newspapers. Governments' PR firms should be scrutinized and be forced to reveal their campaign methods under the public information act. It is in the interests of the public, *that is us*, to find out what we are being 'sold'. Which is why I joined Artists and Intellectuals Against the Shah. A strangely assorted group of us met regularly in Manhattan in the mid-seventies to see if we could combat the Shah's propaganda machine. What could a small number of people, some of whom had never been to Iran, be able to achieve? Not much, is inevitably the answer. No doubt the Iranian revolutionists who were risking their lives in and outside the country to bring about the deposition of the Shah, looked down on us with righteous contempt. Even if we had buttons!

Manhattan is an important center for thinking people, and when Kurt Vonnegut joined our group we did manage to get write-ups in the New York Times. Kurt Vonnegut was about to achieve cult status and his books were already assigned reading on most university courses. I can honestly say I cannot remember a thing we did except meet in respectably serious places to talk, discuss, and be informed about the terrible conditions of the prisons. Looking back I am sure our small group was probably duplicated in major capitals of the world and in the U.S., certainly in politically sensitive Washington. Maybe the word was passed along and reached liberal democrats there who could see the crowning of the Shah as a Persian Emperor for what it was, window dressing. Maybe Jimmy Carter was someone who heard our underground rumblings, and on the strength of them made a decision not to support the sick dictator when he was eventually overthrown.

But even if there is a vague possibility these groups influenced our President's decisions I am certain our actions had no value at all in Iran. A revolution as successful as the Islamic one has to have been a long time in the making. Khomeini had been opposing the Shah since 1964, fifteen years to build a grassroots rebellion against the enforced westernization of his country. He spread the word among the faithful in such a way that it could not be mistaken for anything but the religious dogma it was,. The religious, you see, are already committed to a cause. They need no reminder of the human condition they are lectured on it weekly, and not in the forgettable form of a

funny sit-com on television. The Marxist-Lenin-Trotsky believers were bitterly disappointed when the Islamic Republic came into being. Many had risked their lives and forfeited their lives to remove the Shah but their numbers were small, and perhaps for that literacy was to blame but I have to draw the conclusion from this revolution from within that the power of religious thought to change things should not be underestimated. A lesson worth remembering.

The Shah was deposed mostly by shop keepers shutting up shop. They had stored sufficient goods for themselves and the shopkeepers went on strike. *Another great example of non-violent protest.* And Arthur Miller recognized is when he said there would be a revolution in American if all the shops were closed for one day! In Iran there was a regime change, and some people think it was a change for the worst, but I believe that despite the horrors of religious oppression (and the victimization of gay people and women) the Iranian revolution was as true an expression of the *people's* revolutionary spirit as the French. *And it succeeded!* Even if, like the French, it went to extremes. However regrettable Mademoiselle Guillotine was, I do not think there are many French people today who want to return to monarchy.

No matter how many causes are 'betrayed' I cannot stop protesting what I believe in. In urging you to protest, protest, protest, I have many more successful causes to report but you will be bored before I have finished listing them. South America may have escaped my ministrations but I did boycott grapes, along with millions of other people, and thanks to the dedication of

people like Chavez, *we did succeed in protecting migrant workers and bringing their plight to public attention.* I have been on committees to save countless buildings, contributed to national parks preservations, saved this, stopped that. And it continues apace. I do not, however, class myself as a real activist. I am a part-time activist, which I believe we ALL should be. My latest? Well, if you must know... I moved back home and joined the unpopular Green Party. We had one member elected to our commercially oriented town council. We had no office. We met in bars and consolidated. We had the faith. Now, twelve years later, there is a healthy *majority* of Green seats and our town is called a Green Town. I no longer bother with their celebration parties, I just luxuriate in the color green wherever I go. Given how good righteous campaigning makes me feel I wonder more people do not join in.

I think we learned from the Nazi era, and for the first time, that within one seemingly successful culture there is always another one that is unfairly treated. This was what motivated us to look at our own, even if it took another generation to grapple with that problem. Our elders were in shock after the war and wanted to circle the wagons. We were invited, especially by Jean Paul Sartre, to understand how it happened.

And we can be inspired to action by the political actions of others. Castro was the first to pull away from the Capitalist Idealism we succumbed to after the war, and his pull was an enormous one. The success of his revolution reverberated throughout South America and Che Guarava became a covert national hero for students critical of the Government's complicity in

supporting repressive regimes. *These feelings may have contributed the wonderful success story of Caesar Chavez who gained such sympathy for his cause.* Born a Mexican American who co-founded with Dolores Huerta the United Farm Workers Association, he continued in his non-violent and ethnically loyal way to carry on the kind of work Hal Ware began in 1931 when American communists tried to help American farm workers mechanize and collectivize with farm workers associations. (Strange that today we feel victimized by both these abstract nouns as we try and eat food from enriched and organic soil.) In the 1970's Chavez worked for Hispanic power over laborers unions. *His slogan 'Si, se puede', (Yes, it can be done) carried him through many successful protests and led to the banning of the short hoe in California as an unsafe tool.* He then went on to the danger of pesticides and had us boycotting grapes for years: the first instance for me, peacefully and domestically '*voting with my dollar*'. His legacy is enormous in his grateful and affectionate ethnic community and I have just learned from Wikipedia that there are eight states that recognize his birthday as a national holiday. *A success story indeed.*

From an Evolutionary *and* a Creationist point of view, we are stuck with the belief in equality. With the presumption of equality comes, naturally, the need to implement it. Whatever the *tangible* difference say, between someone living the good life in L.A. or someone disabled in Sierra Leone this presumption and belief is something we live by. Not to act on it, not to base some of daily actions on it, or worse, to ignore it completely must ultimately

knaw away at our sense of self. No matter how hard we try to bolster that sense of self with endless self-promotion, so blazonly advocated at the end of the disastrous twentieth century, this bloated self will inevitably shatter when confronted with disbelief from without, whether in the eyes of a servant, a disappointed fan, or the distrust of a spouse of child. We have all inherited the planet and the good things in life that are free, the sun, water, the sea and seeds, and we do not like to be reminded that some of us have managed to grab a greater share of these things. The role of the benefactor is a privilege, giving is a privilege and we should not need to be thanked for it. We do not need to be. It is enough to feed the seed of equality (and thereby justice and morality), see it grow and flower with perhaps very little tending work by the majority of us, simply an awareness of what is going on.

I hope all I have said is enough to make you want to donate to my present cause, www.thepeaceproject.com. You can donate through the website, as a start, but much more importantly you can join the group by going to www.thewholenineyards.com and signing up for Lisa's blog.

The End

CONFESSIONS OF SUCCESS

by

eliza wyatt

How to navigate LINUX

Control P = icon

click and click on file to cancel

TO DO:

HOME = eliza

Desktop and Default to Documents

on Desktop – get to DOCUMENTS 3

Make sure you are in PLACES or HISTORY

