

Muriel Strand  
07-10-2

# Sustainable Work for Youth

(& Everyone Else Too)

Many low-income youth feel hopeless in the face of a future where almost all the visible jobs are minimum-wage or illegal, where they foresee either death or prison. Even many middle-income families face terrifying economic insecurity, with no end in sight.

Youth of all income levels also confront future global climate challenges such as sea levels likely to flood Sacramento, increasingly intense weather and likely flooding from rivers, as well as ocean acidification which will collapse the oceanic food chain unless we act immediately. We confront peak oil, and also nuclear arsenals which could cause a nuclear winter sufficient to counteract global warming and incidentally obliterate civilization.

Yet well-meaning adults just say that youth must resolutely avoid drugs and gangs, and instead go to college, get a good job, live in a nice, air-conditioned house with a tidy mow-and-blow unsustainable lawn, and put lots of money in a 401k (where it's almost never invested sustainably) for later. In ordinary times, this might be a good idea. But this advice is based on double standards and wishful thinking, two reasons the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

First, drug prohibition and enforcement are based on bad science, a terrible example for youthful students. And when law enforcement attempts to define who is in a gang and who is not, without unbiased and due process, who is really choosing? Pretending that youth can truly choose when cops get all the power to label them is just wishful thinking.

Though drug abuse is dead-end behavior, prohibition and prison is a lot worse than the disease. We must reform this prohibition that supports organized criminal gangs and police corruption, and we must not allow police and prison spending to exceed (or even approach) educational spending. We reversed Prohibition in the 1930s and we must not do it again. Besides, our incarceration rates are unsustainable.



So to resolve problems of drugs, gangs, and guns, adult society (that's you and me!) must substitute respect and truth for double standards and wishful thinking. Let us do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us remove the beam from our own eye before complaining about the speck in our neighbor's.

**Second, colleges (as well as high schools) are not teaching youth (of any income level) what they need to know to build an ecologically sustainable future.** While much of the information may be there, it is rarely presented in a coordinated way.

**Although low-income youth are naturally preoccupied by more immediate survival concerns, there are solutions to our ecological and sustainability challenges which would effectively address just such worries.** Substantial reductions in energy use and huge improvements in social issues such as health care costs and jobs are available simultaneously, **but only if done right.**

And authoritarianism is our cultural illness which now prevents us from doing it right. **We have been treating Mother Earth like a slave, and we must start treating her—and each other—with friendship and kindness.** We must replace competition with co-operation. In individual competition, you can't win unless someone else loses. **Only through co-operation and community can we all win.**

### **It's Not About Money**

The classical story of Midas shows us the limitations of money. Midas, granted a wish by Dionysus, wished that everything he touched would turn to gold. "So Midas, king of Lydia, swelled at first with pride when he found he could transform everything he touched to gold; but when he beheld his food grow rigid and his drink harden into golden ice then he understood that this gift was a bane and in his loathing for gold cursed his prayer." Some say his family were also turned into gold statues.

When Dionysus heard Midas' plaint, he relented and told him how to reverse his wish, whereupon "Midas, now hating wealth and splendor, moved to the country, and became a worshipper of Pan, the god of the fields."



## Resources for Eco-Social Sustainability

### **Food**

- Diet for a Small Planet (1991) by Frances Moore Lappé  
Nourishing Traditions (1999) by Sally Fallon (641.5 F196)  
The Diet Cure (1999) by Julia Ross (615.854 R824)  
The Metabolic Typing Diet (2000) by William Wolcott (613.25 W851)  
Prescription for Nutritional Healing (1997) by Balch & Balch (615.854 B174)  
Medicinal Herbs: see "Herbs Therapeutic use" in the Sacramento Library

### **Farming**

- The One-Straw Revolution: An Introduction To Natural Farming (1978) by Masanobu Fukuoka (631.58 F961)  
Introduction to Permaculture (1991) by Bill Mollison with R.M. Slay (631.58 M726)  
Permaculture: A Designers' Manual (1988) by B. Mollison (631.584 M726)  
The Sustainable Vegetable Garden: A Backyard Guide To Healthy Soil And Higher Yields (1999) by John Jeavons and Carol Cox (635 J43s)  
The Biodynamic Sowing and Planting Calendar 2008, by Maria & Matthias Thun  
Bioshelters, Ocean Arks, City Farming: Ecology as the Basis of Design (1984) by Nancy J. Todd & John Todd

### **Shelter & Warmth**

- Mortgage-FREE! Radical Strategies for Home Ownership (1998) by Rob Roy (643.12 R888)  
\* by Bruce Anderson and Malcolm Wells (697.78 A545)  
The Passive Solar Energy Book: A Complete Guide to Passive Solar Home, Greenhouse and Building Design (1979) by Edward Mazria (696 M476)  
The Integral Urban House Self-reliant Living In The City (1979) by the Farallones Institute  
Biosphere 2: The Human Experiment (1991) by John Allen (304.2 All)  
Human Scale (1980) by Kirkpatrick Sale (301.509 SAL)  
Solviva by Anna Edey ([www.solviva.com](http://www.solviva.com))

\* Passive Solar Energy

## Co-operation, Community & Nonviolence

Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box (2002) The  
Arbinger Institute (658.4092 L4344)

Boredom: Root of Discontent and Aggression (1975) ed. Franz Goetzl  
(152.4 B731)

The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil (2007)  
by Philip Zimbardo ([www.lucifereffect.com](http://www.lucifereffect.com) or 155.962 Z71)

The Search For A Nonviolent Future: A Promise Of Peace For  
Ourselves, Our Families, And Our World (2004) by Michael  
Nagler (303.61 N149)

Peace Pilgrim: Her Life and Work in Her Own Words (1982)  
([www.peacepilgrim.com](http://www.peacepilgrim.com) or 327.172 P355)

Insecure At Last: Losing It In Our Security-Obsessed World (2006) by  
Eve Ensler (305.4209 E59)

We Are The Ones We've Been Waiting For: Inner Light In A Time of  
Darkness – Meditations (2006) by Alice Walker (811.54 W177w)

[www.permaculture.org](http://www.permaculture.org)

[www.energybulletin.net/12984.html](http://www.energybulletin.net/12984.html)

[www.oceanarks.org/](http://www.oceanarks.org/)

[www.greenbeltmovement.org/](http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/)

[www.organicconsumers.org/csa.htm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/csa.htm)

[www.norcal solar.org/](http://www.norcal solar.org/)

[www.gaiam.com/realgoods/](http://www.gaiam.com/realgoods/)

[www.solareco.com/index.cfm](http://www.solareco.com/index.cfm)

[www.bioneers.org](http://www.bioneers.org)

[www.greenforall.org/](http://www.greenforall.org/)

[www.nonviolence.org](http://www.nonviolence.org)

[www.nonviolenceinternational.net/](http://www.nonviolenceinternational.net/)

[www.nonviolenceworks.com/](http://www.nonviolenceworks.com/)

[www.thekingcenter.org/prog/](http://www.thekingcenter.org/prog/)

[www.teachpeace.com](http://www.teachpeace.com)

[www.drugpolicy.org/news/incarcerex.cfm](http://www.drugpolicy.org/news/incarcerex.cfm)

<http://theyesmen.org/>

[www.revilly.com/](http://www.revilly.com/)

[www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org)