
SATYA - TRUTHFUL IN THOUGHT, SPEECH & ACTION

Ah, But the True Protest is Beauty By Ruth Ann Angus

After watching Earth Day programs and listening to talks I find myself pondering why we are stuck in solving the climate change problem. Sure, there are some success stories and thank heaven for those. But as with many of the critical issues that mankind has faced in the past and still face today, we seem to take two steps forward and three steps back, basically going nowhere.

Since my resurgence back into the peace and nonviolence world, and as opposed to what I did during the turbulent 1960s and 70s, I am now pretty much against protest activities. True protest, as my friend Phil Ochs used to say, is beauty because it is not just a gathering of people marching for or against something, whether or not that protest is intended as a wake-up call or education for the masses or to rail against a government. True protest is a concerted campaign aimed at a specific industry, not the government, and is mostly involved with economics. Nothing ever changes unless it is hit in the pocketbook. This is the failure in the climate change movement. It is the failure of the environmental movement in general. It is the failure with most of the current issues for which we have been out in the streets marching.

I am all for educating the public on issues. I am no longer interested in trying to educate the people we have placed in office, who should in the first place know better, even though I insist we keep badgering them reminding them they are our representatives. I am opposed to wasting my time marching or standing in front of the White House or the Capitol or any other government institution because unless it hits them in the pocketbook they will not change. Nor am I interested in making myself feel warm and fuzzy by being arrested.



***Watch your thoughts;
they become words.***

***Watch your words; they
become actions.***

***Watch your actions;
they become habits.***

***Watch your habits; they
become character.***

***Watch your character; it
becomes your destiny.***

(author unknown)

I **am** for a well-planned concerted campaign geared towards affecting or even damaging the economic life of industries that are the root cause of climate change and this includes financial institutions, insurance companies, agriculture, and obviously the fossil fuel industry. No change in our government policy will take place until we disable the injustice in the economics of these industries. That is where our true protest must go and not just us marching in front of their buildings but working up some actions that will affect them financially. If we do not do this, we will not succeed in conquering climate change or for that matter any of the inequality issues prevalent in our world. The Corona Virus is nature slapping us in the face. It is time we stopped fooling around and got serious about true protest.

Food -- Will We Have It?

By

Ruth Ann Angus

As the pandemic drags on supplies of things we rely on in our daily lives have become slim to nonexistent. Shelves in some markets are bare. Specific items are missing or there are only a few available. Looking at this, I wonder what to expect as we gradually come back to active life?

One of the most disheartening things I saw with my fellow human beings was the run on toilet paper. It said something to me about just where our minds are located these days. To top it off after running to the market and denuding the shelves of toilet paper, for many it was a dash to the gun store to buy weapons. How discouraging.

As things have dragged on with the pandemic it suggested for me that food is going to become a major issue in this country. Already milk is being poured down the drain because dairies cannot get it to suppliers. Farm fields are being plowed under instead of harvested because there is no outlet for the farmers' goods even if they are harvested. I do not know, but I am

guessing cattle, pigs and chickens are getting a lease on life and not being slaughtered. One pork processing facility in South Dakota had to shut down because a few the workers came down with the virus. One might assume there will soon be few pork products available.

Bulk supplies of food that normally go to restaurants, hotels and schools are going nowhere, probably slated for destruction. Food banks are overwhelmed with new people asking for food as so many are now unemployed. And yet there are no plans in place to avoid this appalling food waste.

An article in the Earth Island Journal produced in Berkeley spells out a small light of hope that there are groups attempting to counter this. Written by Audrey Mei Yi Brown, Operations Manager at Food Shift and a writer and activist in the Bay area, the article spells out exactly what is happening, what may get worse, and a possible solution.

Brown says "The image of empty shelves in produce aisles has become commonplace during the Covid-19 crisis, while food banks are hustling to meet a

growing demand for food assistance. These barren shelves and overwhelmed pantries suggest a country in famine. But the fact is that we are simultaneously wasting food en-masse — plowing produce back into farm fields, dumping milk into lagoons, and watching perishables expire in warehouses.

The illogic of simultaneous food insecurity and food waste is clear enough to anyone. That we wrestle with these problems nonetheless speaks to the structural inequity behind unequal access to all resources, including food. The coronavirus adds fuel to the fire, illuminating the cracks in our clunky multinational food system.”

Clunky food system is an understatement. Agriculture which long ago abandoned the family farm for large scale operations appears to be incapable of dealing with the current situation. The system starts with the farmer and his crop goes on to the shipper, then to the processing plants, and from the processing plants to the distributor and the distributor to the market, whether that market be the grocery store, restaurants, hotels, schools, or other establishments. Where is the breakdown now?

Obviously, the consumer still has a need for products. That the need for restaurants, the hospitality industry, and schools has dried up should not be affecting the distribution to the supermarket. But it is. What was once slated for those other industries is ending up being dumped. As Brown states, “Farmers operate on a hope that by harvest time they will have a market for their produce. But the current pandemic makes clear that our food

system is optimized for production output, not resilience.”

She goes on to say that even without the pandemic there were people suffering with food insecurity and that financial insecurity “begets food insecurity.” With the pandemic food insecurity is surging as Americans are out of work and are responding to this onset of food insecurity by taking to hoarding.

Brown writes about an organization called Food Shift that has operated in the Bay area for eight years performing food recovery operations. Their research has found that food is “often discarded in bulk supply simply for having been stickered incorrectly or because it is surplus. Small cosmetic imperfections can also trigger a trip to the landfill. It is often easier and cheaper to discard food than to donate it.” Food Shift recovers as much as they can and last year that amounted to 120,000 pounds of food that would have gone to waste.

The pandemic has brought to the forefront how our country’s industrial food system has been unable, unwilling or inflexible to change to meet the public’s needs. Instead organizations like Food Shift have stepped up and this is encouraging news. Food Shift is filling in the gaps where regular food supplies have been interrupted. As Brown states, “Born out of need, new localized food networks are emerging.”

Brown also emphasizes that right now we need the Food Bank and soup kitchens to provide the urgent need for food, but we also need to “push for longer-lasting relief” that only economic justice can provide. She goes on to suggest legislative

measures the federal government can take such as an investment in food assistance rather than “purging food stamp rolls.”

Food insecurity, she writes, is ultimately a local problem since marginalized people are not visible on the national level.

However, these are people we know in our neighborhoods. Federal funding is needed to support local agencies, such as Food Shift or local groups working with our Food Bank, as these have direct insight into community needs.

My friend Reverend Rich Kurrasch wrote to me early on with the pandemic asking a question. What if you came to the store wanting a can of beans and came to the shelf and saw that there was only one can left and you and another person showed up at the same time to reach for it? What would you do? Grab it and run? Let the other person have it? Shoot him? Rich wanted to know how, in the spirit of nonviolence, one should act. So, I thought about that and believe me this is a difficult thing to answer. Nonviolence says we should be loving and compassionate. Perhaps that other person is starving and can only afford this one can of beans. Then yes, let him have it. But what if you are starving too and this is the last can of beans? What then?

I had a neighbor for many years who collected guns. He was a bit of a recluse living in the house next door, barely ever coming out. He once asked to use my Internet to purchase guns. One day he said to me the time is going to come when people in this country will be fighting over food. He wanted to be prepared. Prepared to shoot. Eventually he moved away to a rural place near Eureka, California where he lives with some like-minded individuals.

I wonder what he is thinking now. One thing is for sure. He is prepared. He is not nonviolent.

Is this our future? So far, we have exhibited on a scale that frightens me that we could turn to violence. We will grab everything we can and hoard food and other living supplies. And if it comes to it, will we shoot?

Let us hope -- and yes, pray that we are better people than we have so far been as this food crisis will undoubtedly increase. Let us give thought to how we can change our food system to work for the good of all people and see to it that a new and better working system is put into place. In the meantime, please do not hoard food and, as you can, support the local food groups who are working tirelessly to make sure everyone is fed. Everyone has a right to food.

