

## **My Peace Depends on Your Peace:**

### **A Vision of an Alternative World Already Being Built and Revealed by the Pandemic**

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#### **The new activism**

Under the media radar, a lot of exciting activism is taking place – women, men, and grassroots organizations with unstoppable creativity. One can feel and hear the vibrant, diverse, and multifaceted activity. They are not waiting for the Left to re-organize, but have begun building the foundations of a new social order in Israel and around the world: the gift economy and the solidarity economy, communal families (e.g., urban communities), zoning and localism, cooperatives for work and housing, eco-villages, non-academic knowledge-production institutions (e.g., the Feminist Academy in Haifa or the University of the Earth in Mexico), grassroots services that the state fails to provide (women's shelters against male violence, for example) or that state religions seek to obstruct (egalitarian synagogues), and courageous partnerships between so-called political adversaries (Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians in EcoPeace Middle East, for example).

These initiatives reflect a rebellion against capitalism (especially in its neoliberal version), the nation state, and the Western paradigm. They respond to the deep anxieties and insecurity of the individual standing alone (without the protection of trade unions, a stable job, the family, or the state) and confronting a climate crisis, countries that have ceased serving their residents, the corporate regime, democracies turning authoritarian, technology and artificial intelligence that profoundly transform our world, and a consumer society that wrongly teaches that the freedom to buy is true freedom. The activists who are creating the New World from below help sharpen the understanding that we are not reaching for the moon or Mars, but rather seeking warmth, care, connection, bonding, and security. To unite the disparate forces of all these initiatives, we need a new social contract and vision of a different society.

The global epidemic has revealed and clarified what many women and men have already known: our vulnerability when we are lonely and isolated; our need for solidarity, a gift economy, and bonding; the significance of human relationships, connections, and boundary crossing – such as food donations from the Palestinian Kafr Qasem to the ultra-Orthodox Jewish Bnai Brak; the longing for a feeling of family. All these are practices that support us when the state fails us, exposing the wretchedness of existing institutions (political parties, the parliament, the health system) in which politicians are at a loss and the old conceptions fail at dealing with Corona just as they were helpless at dealing with inequality, the climate crisis, and human security. It is precisely the isolation, social detachment, and fears that create the opportunity for inner examination, for looking at what is important to us: our real needs, our interdependence, our craving for bonding with people and within communities. We find our shared humanity because we are all human beings, because my peace is interconnected with your peace.

The global epidemic has exposed what many of us have known for a long time – that we have no alternative but to take a new path, to collaborate and deepen the much needed radical change already launched by the new activism, whose benefit has been revealed by the pandemic. This change must simultaneously address values; the social, political and economic order; the development of new paradigms; the intersectional struggle that concurrently addresses issues of war and peace, feminism, and social justice; the environment and nature; all structures of oppression; and, most importantly, new ways to imagine another world. A new vision that serves as our compass and gives us hope.

### **Needs and goals**

We know what we want: a new social contract that is based on the necessities of life and not on the looting of women, the disadvantaged, workers, and nature, as patriarchal capitalism has done for centuries for the sake of maximizing profits and increasing consumption and wealth. A social contract that views nature as a living entity rather than a commodity that we own and can be used to extinction; that puts life production before goods production; that is based on giving, caring, and empathy; that respects my uniqueness, is open to the stranger and those who are different, as diversity is more worthy than separatism, and variety is more worthy than rejection of the other; that provides security – social, welfare, health, personal, and above all

the confidence that there will be hands to catch me when I fall, that I will not be alone in moments of difficulty. Because as long as there is one woman without security, or one man under occupation and oppression, we all live without security. My peace is your peace.

### **The vision**

The starting point is the maternal gift economy. Rather than the accumulation of capital and property and the principles of transaction, the gift economy is a model of the free distribution of products and services according to the needs of the other. It exists at all times and is particularly prominent in times of trouble and danger, as in this time of pandemic. It is an economy that promotes and constructs bonding and community among people, but is denied and exploited by capitalism, which in fact cannot exist without it. It testifies to the fact that Homo Sapiens is also Homo Donans, the giving person.

The gift economy is a major anchor of the solidarity economy that produces and shares the material wealth among all, and of the Buen Vivir approach, which emphasizes collectives and harmony among humans and between humans and nature; both have already made their mark in Ecuador and Bolivia.

My vision continues with the matriarchal heritage. Matriarchy is not a society of power and control, but of peace, balance, partnership, and equality, of responding to needs and living within communities that respect the other and nature, a community that produces freedom while maintaining individual sovereignty. Consequently, matriarchy enables complete security and freedom, including sexual freedom. Matriarchy exists today (such as among the Mosuo in China, the Minangkabau in Indonesia, and the Khasi in India) and in the pre-patriarchal era; its remnants can be found in all societies today, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Indigenous knowledge and culture, which permeate our lives as a real alternative (in restorative justice, truth and reconciliation commissions, healing practices and spirituality, for example) are open to us exactly at a time when Western models have failed, but these possibilities have not yet attracted enough attention.

Community is central among First Nations and reflected in concepts such as Ubuntu in South Africa: "Being - means belonging" or "A human is a human through other human," as Desmond Tutu has said. The community is just as important to me as my self is, and it connects me to the

world and nature. The gift economy is the glue that connects community members to each other and to nature and other communities.

These sources of inspiration, which go beyond the common Eurocentric worldview, share a set of perceptions, structures, practices, and values. Together, they lead to a new way of thinking and a new paradigm, allowing us all to reconnect with the legacy of humanity, to re-appropriate humanity's history, stories, and values. The poet Susan Deer Cloud of mostly Mohawk heritage calls it "Rematriation." These perspectives allow us to find our way out of the patriarchal order and begin to build a different world, to imagine an alternative moral behavior that we can all adopt, but also to imagine the possibility of another society whose foundations are needs, community, sharing, consensual decision making, inclusion, giving, connectedness, spirituality, reconciliation, peace, balance, and respect for nature. It is not surprising that the forefathers of the US Constitution drew inspiration from the constitution of the Iroquois.

Today, community re-appears as a worthy option, coinciding with the disintegration of efforts toward integration and a "melting pot" society (in Israel as elsewhere) and the growing convergence of women and men into identity communities, the spread of intentional and local communities, and increasing criticism of the state and nationalism. No wonder the idea of "non-territorial autonomy" is re-blooming.

Thus, communities are again being built that are not necessarily hostile to each other or in competition, but as a truly multicultural society, enabling the creation of a specific, local identity that challenges nationalism whose disadvantages outweigh its advantages. These new communities allow emergence of the new social contract and the rebuilding from below of the infrastructure for a new social order and gift economy. It is precisely the social distancing during the Corona pandemic that brings to light the importance and advantages of community and, as today's intentional communities attest, this can be maintained and nurtured even under conditions of social distancing. The state does not disappear when a communal social order is emerging, but is re-constructed as a framework for coordinating the various collectives, not a framework with its own interests. This approach does not mean a return to the era of hunters and gatherers, but learning alternative modes of being, doing, and thinking. With the pandemic experience, this new understanding and the alternative vision will expand the new activism and attract new publics. Our job is to give them a hand.

This paper is inspired, among other sources, by the Gift Economy as developed by Genevieve Vaughan and Modern Matriarchal Studies as developed by Heide Goettner-Abendroth.