



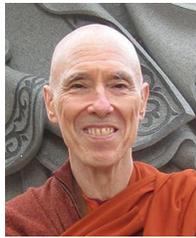
buddhist global relief



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Moving from a Culture of Death to a Culture of Life



By Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi - On September 21, concerned citizens from all across the U.S., and from many other lands, will be converging on New York City for the People's Climate March, billed to be the biggest climate march in history. The immediate occasion for the march is the gathering of world leaders at the United Nations for a summit on the climate crisis being convened by the UN Secretary General. The march's purpose is to tell global leaders that the time for denial and delay is over, that we have to act now if we're going to secure the world against the ravages of climate change.

If we're going to emerge intact, what we need at minimum are binding and enforceable commitments to steep cuts in carbon emissions coupled with a mass-scale transition to renewable sources of energy. However, while clean energy policies are clearly essential in combating climate disruption, a long-term solution must go deeper than adopting new technologies and such pragmatic measures as cap-and-trade or a carbon tax. The climate instability we are facing today is symptomatic of a deeper malady, a cancer spreading through the inner organs of global civilization. The extreme weather events we have experienced come to us as a wake-up call demanding that we treat the underlying causes, the paradigm that underlies our industrial-commercial-financial economy.

The distinctive mark of the dominant paradigm is the locating of all value in monetary wealth. Human value, labor value, natural value all translate into financial value, and the latter is the only value to which the paradigm ascribes ultimacy. All other values must submit to the reign of monetary wealth in the form of increased profits and greater returns on investments. The model posits the goal of the economy to be continuous growth, based on the madcap premise of infinite growth on a finite planet.

This way of thinking depends on a process of "objectification," which means that it treats everything — people, animals, and trees, rivers, land and mountains — as objects to be utilized to generate financial gain for corporations, their executives and their shareholders. This logic of objectification and its scheme of values entail policies aimed at the unrestrained domination and subjugation of nature. The system depends on the unregulated extraction of natural resources to generate energy and produce commodities for sale in the market. It thereby turns nature's bounty into a plurality of goods, leaving behind mountains of waste and pollution.

The corporate paradigm treats people just as callously as it treats stones, trees and soil. It pushes indigenous peoples off their lands and treats labor as an abstract variable, reducing real human beings to figures in a database. This system flourishes by inciting in people insatiable desires for the consumption of material commodities. Its blueprint is the simple "throughput" sequence by which resources and labor are converted into goods that are converted into monetary wealth and material waste.

All these factors functioning in unison churn out the devastation we see around us, signs of a planet in peril. We're living in a world weighed down by "the culture of death," both literally and figuratively. Amid unimaginable luxury, almost 900 million people must endure chronic hunger and malnutrition. Easily cured diseases turn fatal. The gap between the super-rich elite and everyone else grows wider. And climate disruption claims tens of millions of lives each year. Unless we change direction fast, the final outcome could well be the collapse of human civilization as we know it.

To avoid civilizational collapse, we need not only new technologies to reduce carbon emissions but even more fundamentally, a new paradigm, a model for a culture of life. We need, in brief, an alternative way of understanding the world and an alternative set of values conducive to a more integral relationship of people with each other, with nature, and with the cosmos.

This change in worldview must lead to reverence and respect for the natural world, recognized as our irreplaceable home and nurturant mother. It must acknowledge the finitude of nature and treat it accordingly, bearing in mind our responsibility to future generations. It should promote solidarity between peoples everywhere based on empathy, respect, and a shared humanity. It must lead to the development of benign “appropriate technologies,” the selective utilization of natural resources, and the deployment of renewable sources of energy. It should further endorse an ethic of simplicity, contentment and restraint to replace the voracious appetite of consumerism. And most deeply of all, it should awaken in us an aspiration toward communion with the cosmos and all living beings, a harmonization between human ideals and the creative capacities of the universe.

We now stand at a crossroads where we must choose between competing worldviews. Depending on our choice, we can move in either of two directions. We can move toward continued devastation and eventual global collapse, or we can instead turn toward inner renewal and healthier relationships with each other, with the earth, and with the cosmos. As climate change accelerates, the choice before us is being thrown into sharper relief, and thus the need to choose wisely grows ever more urgent.

The obstacles that confront us are formidable. To prevail, we will need exceptional determination, collaboration, and will power. We must be uncompromising in our insistence on the need to make the transition to a higher stage in our technological development and in our cultural and spiritual evolution. For our own sakes and for generations to come, we must bluntly repudiate the culture of death and embrace a new vision, a new economy, a new culture committed to the real enhancement of life.

The People’s Climate March will be one big step in that direction, a powerful demonstration of the strength that comes through unity.

To learn more about the People’s Climate March, visit <http://peoplesclimate.org/march/>

This is an abridged version of an op-ed published in Truthout on August 14, 2014. For the full version, visit <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/25379-moving-from-a-culture-of-death-to-a-culture-of-life-mobilizing-for-the-peoples-climate-march>

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BGR Walk to Feed the Hungry 2014

Dear Friends,

Every day each one of us takes thousands of steps. We walk during work, we take steps while preparing meals, and we walk to enjoy the outdoors. What if a few of those steps could provide tools, seeds, and training to poor farmers in nine countries to improve crop yields? Or if your steps could keep young girls in school and even send the poorest among them to college? What if your steps could empower women? What if your short walk in a park could sustain urban food programs in the inner cities of New York or Detroit, giving your neighbors access to fresh, healthy food? This is exactly what BGR aims to do. We turn the steps of compassionate people like you into hunger relief at our annual Walk to Feed the Hungry.

Save the Date

Ann Arbor, MI	Sat. Sep. 27
Escondido, CA	Thur. Oct. 23
Houston, TX	Sat. Nov. 22
Los Angeles, CA	Sun. Oct. 26
New York, NY	Sat. Nov. 1
San Francisco, CA	Sat. Oct. 4
San Jose, CA	Sun. Oct. 19
Seattle, WA	Sat. Sep. 6
St. Louis, MO	Sun. Oct. 5
Willington, CT	Sun. Nov. 9

BGR began with one **Walk to Feed the Hungry** in 2010 to raise funds for projects like those described above. Our small beginning has grown! The **2014 Walk to Feed the Hungry** will be taking place in ten cities in the U.S. Please check the list below, save the date, and join us in a walk near you. Your participation will mean hunger relief for struggling communities around the world and here in America. If you cannot walk yourself, please donate generously to support others who will be walking.

More information and updates about individual walks can be found on our website: www.buddhistglobalrelief.org. And while you are there, please take a look at our projects. You'll see that they all revolve around one simple mission: to combat hunger and malnutrition. BGR is an all-volunteer organization, meaning 90% of our budget goes directly to those in need, whether in Asia, Africa, Haiti, or North America.

The Buddha said, "the gift of food is the gift of life." By walking, you'll be giving life and light to the poor and vulnerable throughout the world.

Warmest Regards,

Kim Behan, Carla Prater, and the BGR 2014 Walk Team

For more information about the walks, visit

www.buddhistglobalrelief.org



Feeding Kids in Haiti the Bread of Learning



By Kim Behan - In 2010, in the wake of the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, BGR began a partnership with the What If? Foundation (WIF), a U.S.-based organization that has been actively sponsoring a food program for hungry children in the Ti Plas Kazo neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. Two years ago, WIF broadened its mission from hunger relief to education, and BGR joined them as an active partner. During the 2013-14 academic year, WIF supported 184 young people through its School Scholarships program, which covers the cost of tuition and other associated costs.

Few children in Haiti gain the opportunity to receive an education. Tuition for elementary students averages \$350 per year. High school tuition averages \$500 per year. With only 10% of schools in the country being "public," children without the money to pay "private" school tuition are left out. Only about 25% of students are able to continue beyond 6th grade.

This figure, however, is changing in the Ti Plas Kazo neighborhood, thanks to WIF, BGR, and our partnership with the Na Rive education team in Haiti. The Na Rive team mentors each scholarship recipient, provides additional support through the after-school program, and involves parents to maximize their children's academic success. The impact has been powerful: over 95% of the students sponsored each year advance to the next grade or graduate!



Earlier this month, lucky girls and boys in Haiti are again putting on their uniforms and beginning the 2014–15 academic year. This year, WIF is again providing scholarships to about 180 students. A grant from BGR will enable them to provide scholarships to 38 elementary school students and 30 high school students.

With school in Haiti starting this week, we'd like to introduce you to two students whose lives have been changed thanks to BGR's support of the WIF scholarship program.

Jean Kelly is entering 3rd grade. He lives in the Ti Plas Kazo neighborhood with his mother and siblings and attends the food program regularly. He says: "This year, once again, the What If? Foundation is sending me to school. I feel very proud, because it is very, very difficult for the poor to pay for school. For the past five years you have helped me to obtain the bread of learning, which means so much to me and my family. Thank you."

Delia is excited to be entering high school: "This scholarship is a huge gift from heaven. I am working very hard to excel in my classes to become a woman ready to serve society. Thank you so much to everyone!"

As Jean Kelly puts it, education is “the bread of learning.” Education is also one of the most critical factors in eliminating poverty and creating a more just and peaceful world. We are grateful for your ongoing support and commitment to BGR, which is making this school year possible for Jean Kelly, for Delia, and for many other children in Ti Plas Kazo.



(Based on information provided by the What If? Foundation)

How You Can Help

Opportunities are available now to assist with Walks to Feed the Hungry in many locations this fall, and to do outreach for the 2014 Combined Federal Campaign. If you are interested in helping out with these or other efforts, check out the list of [Volunteer Opportunities](#) on our website. Some volunteers need to be located in a particular place, but most can work from home, wherever that may be. Please contact us at info@buddhistglobalrelief.org for further information.

As always, donations to BGR are welcome. You can donate by PayPal or credit card on the [website](#), on Facebook, or by check to:

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Thank you for your help!
