



our developing world's voices Volume 18, No. 3

Check out our Reality tours to Burma and Cuba on pages 7 and 8 and join us!

All Things Are Connected- Local to Global

The Downgrading of America by: Jim Hightower, Truthout Excerpts



New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street, New York.
(Photo: [regenmond](#))

As Lily Tomlin noted, "No matter how cynical you get, it's almost impossible to keep up." The deficit ceiling brouhaha is so much political playacting around a made-up deficit "crisis" in order to avoid dealing with what's crushing America's middle class and draining the lifeblood from our economy: the jobs deficit.

Then the Wall Street credit rating firm, Standard & Poor's..arrogantly, recklessly and wrongly downgraded the United States of America from AAA to AA+.

Recall that S&P rated AAA hundreds of billions of dollars worth of subprime- mortgage investment packages that turned out to be, in Wall Street's lingo, "toxic waste." These packages precipitated the financial crash of 2008. Thanks, S&P! And judged Lehman Brothers to be a highly rated investment, when -- poof -- Lehman suddenly went bankrupt! And made another little error -- a \$2 trillion miscalculation in deficit math that should have altered its negative conclusion. They admitted error, but still downgraded the U.S. anyway.

Panama Free Trade Agreement

"A tax haven . . . has one of three characteristics: It has no income tax or a very low-rate income tax; it has bank secrecy laws; and it has a history of noncooperation with other countries on exchanging information about tax matters," said Rebecca Wilkins, senior counsel with Citizens for Tax Justice, a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to improving U.S. tax policy. "Panama has all three of those. ... They're probably the worst."

"It directly undermines Obama's putative domestic agenda of job creation, cracking down on tax havens and collecting revenue from tax-dodging corporations," said Lori Wallach, Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch. "The [free trade agreement] would forbid future use of existing policy tools to combat financial crime."

Corporate Personhood

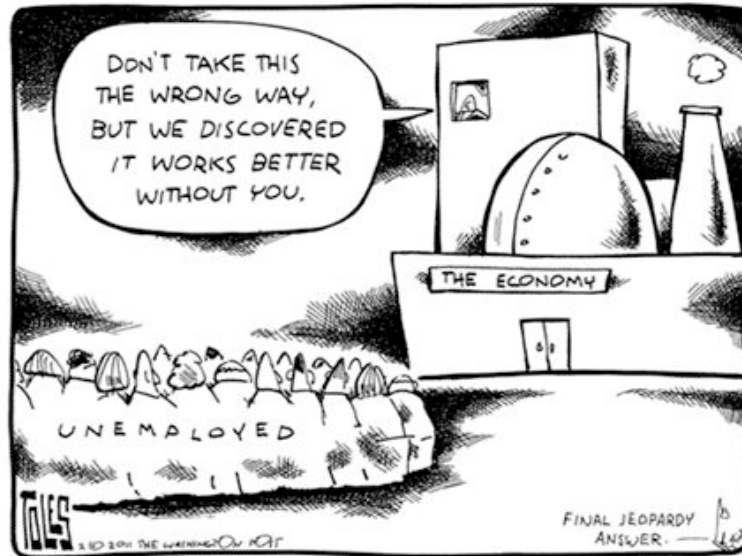
Here's the paradox in this whole concept of 'corporate personhood.' When it comes to rights, Republicans say corporations are people. But when it comes to the responsibilities of personhood - like paying taxes, being sued for negligence or criminal manslaughter, that sort of thing - their response is 'Are you crazy? We're talking about corporations here, not people.'"

Tax Breaks For The Rich, Budget Cuts For The Rest Of Us William Domhoff, Sociology professor and author [Who Rules America?](#) excerpted ... the American dream. keeps the bottom 99.5% hoping for better and prevents social and political instability. The odds of getting into that top 0.5% are very slim. Most of the serious economic damage was done by the top 0.1% (one tenth of one percent! 0.076% of the population) in Q1 of '11, America's top corporations reported 31% profit growth and 31% reduction in taxes, the latter due to profit out sourcing to low tax rate countries.... The year 2010 was a record year for compensation on Wall Street, while corporate CEO compensation rose by over 30%.... Corporate tax accounted for 27.3 percent of federal revenue in 1955. In 2010, corporate tax accounted for only 8.9 percent of federal revenue. In 2010 a dozen major companies, including GE, Verizon, Boeing, Wells Fargo, and Fed Ex paid US tax rates between -0.7% and -9.2%. Production, employment, profits, and taxes have all been outsourced....

Richest corporations are on Wall Street (banking & finance), Health Care, and Oil.

1,470 Americans earned over \$1 million in 2009 and didn't pay any taxes. The richest 400 Americans paid 30 percent of their income in taxes in 1995, but they now pay only 18 percent. The average tax rate for millionaires was 22.4 percent in 2009, down from 30.4 percent in 1995. The average millionaire saves \$136,000 a year due to reduced tax rates.

Warren Buffet says "Tax the Wealthy!"



Resources from New Economy Working Group

<http://neweconomyworkinggroup.org/>

- [Report: How to Liberate America from Wall Street Rule](#)
- [Book: Agenda for a New Economy: 2nd edition](#)
- [Book: Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World is Possible](#)
- [Yes! Magazine](#)

Effective action in 9 action clusters will shift the economic system's defining value from money to life, its locus of decision making from global to local, its favored dynamic from competition to cooperation, its defining ethic from externalizing costs to embracing responsibility, and its primary purpose from growing individual financial fortunes for a few to building living community wealth to enhance the health and well-being of everyone. We humans face an epic choice between the certain outcome of continuing business as usual and the possible future it is within our means to create through conscious collective action.

New Economy Story

Articulate and popularize a new cultural story of the possibility and potential of living economies that support a healthy biosphere, a prosperous and meaningful life for all people, and vibrant, democratic communities of place. We humans live by the stories that shape our shared understanding of our human possibilities. To change the human future, change stories that frame our collective action. What's Your Story?

Living Wealth Indicators

Replace GDP, stock indices, and other purely financial indicators by which we currently evaluate economic performance with indicators of human health, social well-being, and ecological integrity. Concurrently identify and eliminate system characteristics that create an imperative for endless economic expansion. We get what we measure, so measure what we want.

Living Wealth Money System

Democratize the money system to root the power to create and allocate money in people and democratically governed communities of place. Money is an accounting chit that shapes the resource allocation decisions of human societies. Those who control its creation and allocation control the society, so place that power in the hands of those who have a natural interest in using it to link underutilized resources with priority needs to create living community wealth.



Real Democracy

Change the rules of the electoral system to replace the current political and economic plutocracy (one-dollar, one-vote rule by wealthy persons and powerful corporations) with a real democracy (one-person, one-vote rule by real living persons). Real democracy secures the right of all people, irrespective of financial means, to a voice in determining the rules that shape their lives.

Local Living Economies

Encourage and support local efforts to develop regionally self-reliant, energy efficient living economies that function as subsystems of their local and regional ecosystems. People with a sense of attachment to a living community of place have a natural interest in optimizing the long-term health and well-being of that community and its local ecosystem. As each community of place moves toward a balanced relationship with its local ecosystem, it contributes to moving the global economy toward a balanced relationship with Earth's biosphere.



Global Rules

Support a transition to a global system of rules and institutions designed to act at the global level to ensure universal rights and protect the integrity of the biosphere and act at all levels to ensure that decisions are taken at the most local level feasible and that the rights of regions to pursue diverse paths are protected.



Peace Economy

Renounce war as an instrument of foreign policy, strive for regional and national self-reliance, and reallocate resources from maintaining instruments of war to meeting needs of all in ways that eliminate root causes of the violent competition for resources. In a world of scarce resources, war is unaffordable. When national economies are substantially self-reliant in their control and use of natural resources, it is unnecessary.

800 US Bases Not Enough? Case in point:

Gangjeong, a small fishing and farming village on Jeju Island 50 miles south of the Korean peninsula, is a Unesco-designated ecological reserve, writes Christine Ahn in the New York Times. It is also the site of a fierce resistance movement by villagers who oppose the construction of a South Korean naval base on the island that will become part of the U.S. missile defense system to contain China. South Korea's president claims the base is to protect Seoul from North Korea. But in a report to Congress, the Pentagon acknowledged that the anti-missile system being deployed there will be useless against North Korean missiles. Instead, the base is aimed at China.

Another way of being:

THE SKY IS WEEPING By Robert C. Koehler Excerpted with permission.

When our lives are torn open, when the worst possible thing happens, what we have, finally, are our roses and our courage.

“I chose to stay in Oslo the entire week. It has felt like the most natural thing to do. I have never experienced any place any time in my life with such a complete absence of aggression. It feels like the city itself has gone into a peaceful place.” The quote is from a young Norwegian-born mom named Turid, who lives in the U.S. but had sent her 9-year-old son to summer camp in Norway. Having just arrived she was waiting for her son at the Oslo train station when the bomb went off nearby, creating momentary pandemonium and instantly changing her plans. Rather than traveling out of the city, she and her son stayed with relatives in Oslo and became part of the national mourning.

Her words of wonder at Oslo's transformation — at not simply the absence of a public desire for vengeance but the palpable expansion of the reach of love — were reflected in numerous stories.

[The very first funeral](#) for one of the young murder victims, 18-year-old Bano Rashid, an Iraqi-born Kurdish refugee, became a moving affirmation of the values her killer sought to destroy. The service, held at a small, rural wooden chapel built in the 19th century, was conducted jointly by an imam and a Lutheran minister.

“Inside, the ceremony was poignant for someone who spanned two countries, two cultures and two religions,” wrote Richard Alleyne in the U.K.’s Telegraph. “It was the first ever in Norway — and maybe the world — to combine Christian and Muslim beliefs.”

A young woman named Ayesha, friend was being laid to rest, “This will make Norway a safer place for people to



clutching a single red rose, said as her make us more tolerant, bring us together, come to,” Alleyne wrote.

[Trond Gunnar Rasmussen](#), chairpersonship of Reconciliation: “As we wait for strous acts to be publicized, the sky is chance some families in grief are known populist right party said: All we can do bracing each other. This demonstrates

of the Norwegian chapter of the Fellow-the names of the victims of these mon-weeping. Our country is so small that the to us is fairly high. The leader of the now is to go around hugging and em-just how united we feel right now. . . .

“More than symbolic events, our socie-ing of the importance of nonviolence enlightenment in this time of darkness.”

ties need to seek a common understand-and a culture of peace. This must be our The sky is weeping . . .

I think about this haunting phrase, which starts to get at the enormity of the tragedy — Norway’s tragedy and all the others. Certainly the sky wept a decade ago, when the World Trade Center fell to its knees and 3,000 people died. But has it ever stopped weeping?

In the United States, vengeance and a covert political agenda trumped the roses, trumped all the grief and self-sacrifice and heroism...I believe the United States could have gone in a different direction — other than war and shopping — after 9/11. When the sky was weeping, when everyone knew it and felt it, a different sort of leader might have reaffirmed the largest of American values rather than exploited the smallest.

“The Norwegian response to violence is more democracy,” Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said to his stunned nation as they gathered in grief. “Norwegians,” he said, “want to defend themselves against violence by showing that they’re not afraid of violence.”

The ultimate tragedy of 9/11 is that this great opening, as [Michael Nagler](#) of the Metta Center for Nonviolence put it, was mythologized in the service of violence and a permanently bloated defense budget. It became a grand excuse for empire and occupation. We dehumanized the people of two nations and proceeded to destroy those nations. We did so for coldly strategic reasons, of course, but the patriotic rallying cry was revenge.

There is a passage we must traverse collectively, beyond geopolitics as usual and through our deepest fears, to a far deeper mutual understanding. Let’s follow Norway.

*Robert Koehler award-winning, Chicago-based journalist, contributor to One World, Many Peaces, nationally syndicated writer. His new book, **Courage Grows Strong at the Wound** (Xenos Press) is now available. koehlercw@gmail.com or his website at commonwonders.com. p 6*

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