

Unitarian Society of Hartford
Sunday February 3, 2008

Now, Forward

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Thank you. I'm honored to speak with you today. I'd like to dedicate this to my parents, Joyce Bauer and David Bauer. When I was involved in my first energy-related environmental cause, it was they who taught me to speak Truth to Power.

A few weekends ago, two Buddhist nuns and a monk were on a Peace March walking to DC and were passing through Portland. I joined them and some others on the Arrigoni Bridge from Portland to Middletown.

At first, I felt self-conscious. Who am I to walk for Peace?

Then several things began to register: that it's January in New England and the temperature is just way too warm; the smell of oil from the storage tanks on the river; the shuddering of the bridge caused by traffic that will use that oil; a "Support Our Troops" decal on the back of an SUV; and a dozen people walking for peace.

Now, I'm going to go out on a limb here and guess that most of you listen to NPR. Me too, I confess. So you can probably guess that this is not the first time those particular pieces of the puzzle have connected themselves for me.

This clarifies my thoughts on the Bridge. I decide I want to be seen. I want people to ask me what I was doing. My career is teaching; I have some skill at explaining things. It would be a chance to draw a straight line between the war in Iraq and, for many who don't know, some reasons to choose our fuel sources with care.

So I've found a purpose, and a haiku comes to mind,

War. Oil. Warming
The Ghost of Jean Petty says:
Glad you could make it!

As I walk, the noise, smell and vibration coming from the nearby rushing cars is jarring to the senses. I think Al Gore has it right. Whether we like it or not, with the amount of climate-changing pollution our cars, houses and power plants are putting into the air, we are waging war on our planet!

But thanks to the patient and persistent speakers for the Earth, we are being reminded that we can choose which side of this war we wish to join.

I am hopeful. I believe we humans are basically good. Though we sometimes show our skill at rationalizing our poor behavior, there is always that little voice inside that provides a moral reminder. I know I find a small measure of peace when I own up to my mistakes, that feeling grows stronger when I go so far as to make amends.

And I am hardly alone in this. More of us are starting to connect the dots in understanding the environmental consequences of our energy choices, and, we do not like what we see. We are waking up.

At the halfway point on the bridge, I become aware of another sound. Someone has a drum, and I realize we are all walking to its beat. It's not loud at all, but it somehow makes itself heard above the rumble and roar of the traffic.

And it's a comfort. To me, that drumbeat anchors me to the collective wisdom of all my environmental mentors. Judi Freidman, Joel Gordes, Bernadette del Chiaro, Roger Smith, Brooke Suter, and every citizen activist I've met. And through them, the collective wisdom of the activists they have known. The drumbeat is a request to live lightly on the Earth, and it spreading.

Yes, I am hopeful. Veterans of the, Beyond War, movement will know why. It is that once 5% of a population becomes aware of an idea, it becomes embedded and will not be forgotten.

I believe we are well past that 5% mark. When the rank and file of the Big Three automakers were polled, the majority, by far, would welcome the chance to build cars that ran on clean fuel rather gasoline, whether that fuel be hydrogen, electricity, or, "plug in hybrids."

I believe that with every solar array, efficiency measure, wind turbine, mass transit project, recycling plan, green building and locally grown food initiative, we are choosing to be accountable for our impact on this world.

Every one of these is the beat of a drum.

The Mohawk nation understood this. Let us borrow from them who ingrained a sustainable philosophy into their decision making process. They referred to it as:

..considering the impact on the seventh generation.

Remember the beat of that drum. Our challenge is this: We need to help our leaders hear that beat and walk to it. We need to help them think about the **seventh generation** rather than a nomination convention.

Here's what I propose. For the big picture, on matters of energy and the environment, ask your local and state leaders how they plan to leave the world in better shape for our grandkids. Ask those who promote "Clean Coal" how your grandkids will have to deal the sequestered carbon dioxide. Ask those who promote nuclear power what future generations should do with our nuclear waste.

We have representatives who can help you with that after the service.

Day to day, hear the drum when the sun warms your face, when the wind moves your hair, whenever water flows around your toes, and know that it is good. And help others hear it.

I'll close with this Haiku:

**Moved to take Action?
Roger Smith of Clean Water
Is set up downstairs.**