

Solidari-Tea

& Truly Free Market Afternoon

Humboldt Grassroots, a local anarchist collective, held the first of planned monthly events, Sunday March 28th, in Old Town Eureka: the **Solidari-Tea & Truly Free Market Afternoon**. The idea for this mutual aid effort came from an HGR member's experience with family who struggle with homelessness.

Moe, a long standing member, came to understand the connection between mental health, homelessness and trauma early in life. Her family member's struggles with intergenerational trauma lead to addiction and chronic homelessness; a national issue felt by millions. She learned first hand that inadequacies in government funding and support for mental health and housing programs contributes to this perpetuation of trauma, and the persistence of chronic homelessness. These risks have increased as national, state and local supports struggle under the added pressure of the covid-19 pandemic.

Moe also told us she Learned from her family members that "Humboldt County has a lot of community violence towards people who are homeless." This violence often leads to the theft and loss of personal belongings such as backpacks, coats, tents and bedding. This frequently leaves people to rebuild their supplies from scratch. Moe's mother, Debrah, told her she was scared to sleep in certain places around Eureka for fear of harassment and violence from predominantly white young men.

Despite these obstacles, through her years of chronic homelessness, she was known in the community for her generosity. Without hesitation she would often give the shoes off her feet. Moe knows that her mother's spirit of generosity came from being raised in the Lakota way where "**giving is in the culture.**" She was born on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota and died an elder and a grandmother. In 2018, Debra passed away on one of winter's coldest nights on the streets of Eureka. Her death coupled with the continued homelessness of Moe's brother were large weights to carry. The media reports of the incident headlined: "Grandmother Found Dead on Eureka Street" coupled with the callous lack of compassion from the City of Eureka when the autopsy determined her death wasn't due to the cold made Monroe's healing process even more difficult.

Now, as the seasons change and vaccine roll out has started, **Humboldt Grassroots** decided it was a good time to come together and put our efforts into a community project that also helps to support one of our own members. So the event was born.

Prior to the event in March we asked the community to give what they could. Leading up to the event members of HGR collected donations from the community and assembled thirty-five kits. They consisted of ten essentials including socks, disposable face masks and Cliff bars among other things. We also served hot tea and cookies as well as burritos donated by the Arcata's **Food Not Bombs** chapter. **Humboldt Area Center for Harm Reduction** showed up bringing hygiene and medical supplies as well as pamphlets with more community resources and a local student activist passed out hygiene wipes and feminine products.

The final factor of this pop-up community effort was the **Free Market**. It consists of two clothing racks under a pop-up tent that is managed by a volunteer from the community. The volunteer sat with the market, organized donations and showed people where things were.

All in all that afternoon was a success. Between three community organizations and a handful of activists and volunteers we were able to help feed and support over two dozen of the local homeless in our community.

Humboldt Grassroots plans on hosting this event monthly. Any interested community members can come for a socially distant good time or to donate. Specific requests that we heard from people who are homeless in Eureka are for backpacks, dry shampoo, body wipes. And during event food. As we said the turnover for loss of personal possessions amongst the homeless is very high and consistent access to bathrooms and showers is very low. The question we heard most often was

"Is there any food?"

There are many ways the community can help. The beauty of mutual aid is that it can be as simple as asking the world outside your door if they have a need for things you no longer want in your life. And in a truly free market you ask the world outside your door if they want what you have to offer.

Follow along and stay informed on how to participate in this new monthly event by checking out the Instagram or Facebook account for Humboldt Grassroots **@HumboldtGrassRoots** or by visiting our website at

www.humboldtgrassroots.com

L. Hawk for the Grassroots Collective

WRITTEN IN GRIEF. MOURNING WITH THOSE WHO MOURN.

We call it systemic racism not because people have a meeting to declare it's racism time. They do, sometimes; usually they don't. We call it systemic racism because it shows up in the systems that sustain a given society. Systemic racism is not in the things individuals do or say, but the structures—invisible if you don't learn to see them—that make racist words and actions possible and convenient.

Operational research theorist Stafford Beer (1926–2002) has a helpful phrase about systems in general that I have been thinking about this week. Beer's idea is as follows: "**The purpose of a system is what it does.**" What a startling and powerful concept that is. We assume that the purpose of a system is what it claims to be, or what it is designed to do. We are taught to think that anything else is a side effect or unfortunate outcome. Beer's formulation suggests that, no, *the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The outcome is the purpose.*

In other words, we have to reconfigure our understanding of "**purpose**," and shift the weight of it from theory into practice.

Americans are addicted to self-absolution, and tend to be very pleased with the high-flown rhetoric of their self-description. We love to describe all adverse outcomes as incidental, or unintentional, or unfortunate, or collateral. We Americans want to be judged on our intentions, not on our behavior, and certainly not on the real-world harm that behavior so consistently produces. Hence the "**greatest country in the history of the world**" pabulum we have to en-

dure from both major parties during every election cycle. Because the systems that produce so much harm are thought to be essentially well-intentioned, the harm continues.

How would we be compelled to change our systems if we truly believed that the purpose of a system is what it does? If your system produces racism, that means you have a system the *purpose* of which is to produce racism. What does that say about you?

I'm thinking about the people, most of them Asian women, who were murdered in Atlanta. That was systemic racism. The fact that one of the main sites was in Cherokee County, so-named in 1831 for the **Cherokee people** who had been violently expelled from those lands a year earlier: that is systemic racism too. That the police spokesperson in Cherokee County has a social media trail of anti-Asian, anti-Mexican, and anti-Black activity: systemic racism. That he described the killer as having had a bad day: systemic racism. That his own department described "him" as having had a bad day: systemic racism. That the news media have all led with this absurd "**sex addiction**" story: systemic racism. That they gave us sensitive profiles of the killer before even naming the victims: systemic racism. That when they finally did name the victims, some of the reports treated the second part of bi-partite Korean first names as a middle initial: systemic racism. That when the stories of the murdered were finally being told, they were shoehorned into "**good immigrant**" narratives: systemic racism. From the macrocosm to the microcosm, what we have seen is exactly the cruelty and disregard that a country such as this, with its pervasive systemic racism, would produce. I know that the pain many people are feeling right now is not at all limited to one violent person or one shooting spree. It is also about the entire superstructure of violence which, they know, is not incidental.

The purpose of a system is what it does.

"**This is not who we are,**" the politicians say, like clockwork. This is not who we are? This is very much who we are. When you hear, "**violence is never acceptable,**" ask yourself who is saying it, and who are they saying it to. It would be wonderful if violence were never acceptable.

In memoriam

Soon Chung Park, Hyun Jung Grant, Suncha Kim, Yong Ae Yue, Xiaojie Tan, Delaina Ashley Yaun, Paul Andre Michels, and Daoyou Feng.

Written in grief.

Mourning with those who mourn.

- Teju Cole
tejucole.com

COMMUNITY LOSES A FIERCE ADVOCATE

The much beloved Yurok tribal elder, Jene McCovey died in February at age 69. She served on many environmental nonprofit boards which benefited from her passion and wise perspective.

Longtime friend and Californians for Alternatives to Toxics Executive Director Patty Clary said she met McCovey in the 1980s when they became actively engaged in stopping the spraying of pesticides around Yurok land.

Regina Chichizola, co-director of Save California's Salmon, described her as an exceptionally creative and strategic woman in furthering environmental causes. The two met two decades earlier during a Save the Redwoods campaign, trying to stop logging in a sacred area of Dillon Creek.

"I think her passing will be felt by a lot of people," Chichizola said. "The fact that she's not there to

organize and help open things up, she'll really be missed. But I also feel like she was an amazingly inspiring person, that she lives on through all of her accomplishments."

McCovey played a major role in the efforts to remove the Klamath Dams—which thanks to her efforts are now coming down, and she was involved in the preservation of the Headwaters Forest. "She's left an amazing legacy," Chichizola said.

McCovey worked with and led a variety of organizations, such as Californians for Alternatives to Toxics, Tri-Valley Communities Against Radioactive Environment, and the Environmental Protection Information Center -EPIC. She also served as an adviser to the Yurok Tribe's Social Services and Natural Resources Advisory Committees and Humboldt County In-Home Support Services.

EPIC honored McCovey in 2018 with the SemperVires Lifetime Achievement Award for her work protecting the environment of the North Coast for decades.

