

## WORLD HOLIDAY

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But since we were dreaming, we decided to dream on. The idea was cheerful, maybe would lead somewhere, and gave us some room for hope.

"Silence," said Kirsten. "We'd have to quiet down and pay attention for a while. We'd have to observe where we are, what we're doing. You can't listen if you are always running around making noise, acting like you have all the answers. You need to stop and be silent for a while."

So one idea would be that everything would stop. All machines except emergency life-supporting technology would shut down for a day. Nothing would be constructed, nothing destroyed. People would walk down freeways empty of cars and trucks, battlefields would be silent, cities would murmur with nothing louder than hearty laughs or the sounds of birds singing. We'd all just step back a little and feel and think about what we are doing to the Earth, to each other and to ourselves. Acknowledging our technological addiction to finite energy resources, we'd contemplate alternative ways of accomplishing what we want to do – and examine more closely what we really want to do in the first place.

We decided, then, that peace and ecology would have to be central themes and that the lessons to be taught by a world holiday would have to be in the form of such direct experiences as planting trees, harvesting food, building solar-energy panels, or recycling reusable materials. Other lessons would come from getting to know the areas we live in better by walking or bicycling – from using no oil or gasoline, creating no pollution. Maybe we could get people to turn off their electricity for a day – no artificial light or heat for a night – and watch the stars sparkle over great cities in the clear skies and darkness of nature.

We were just plain stunned, as we sat there thinking about it, by the image of everybody doing something together – almost anything together. What a powerful notion: to channel all of humanity's mental and, I venture to say under the circumstances, spiritual energy into one shared pattern, even for just a brief time. It seemed to us we'd stumbled upon a tool with the potential to face up to and prevail over all the crazy problems and confusing finds we've gotten ourselves into. Maybe something big enough and positive enough to deflect even our apparently lemming-like drive to extinction. Our kind of world holiday might be able to unite us all in life, to transform the trend toward nuclear war and ecological collapse that would unite us all in death.

The idea fascinated me. I decided I'd see what I could do about it when I returned to California in the New Year.

Though it had been an original idea for us, I discovered soon enough that others had similar thoughts. For example, some people had been trying to make the anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter into a world holiday, but it wasn't sticking.

In my own mind, the world-holiday idea was little more than a week old when I found myself following a lead in Venice, California. A friend said, "**You should talk to Paul Encimer – he's got lots of ideas about things like this.**" So there I was in the office of the Venice Draft Counseling Center with Paul. As he sat there on the table, it was obvious he'd been up into the wee hours with a bottomless cup of coffee advising an endless procession of anguished, fearful, angry and confused young men.

"**First of all,**" he said, "**if you're going to have a day related to nature, you should let nature choose the date.**" People and all their works, he said, have already imposed far too much on nature; this holiday should be dictated by nature's own calendar. And the natural calendar contains four high holidays that relate to the whole planet: the December and June solstices,

when the sun appears farthest south and north, and the March and September equinoxes, when the sun passes over the equator on its journey from one hemisphere to the other.

Paul favored one or both of the equinoxes, because at these times the sun sheds equal light on both northern and southern hemispheres. It is a powerful symbol – and an actual fact – of planetary balance and harmony. Paul also pointed out that in strictly observing the equinoxes, people would experience a precise moment of time, everywhere on Earth, simultaneously. If, for example, you welcome the equinox at midnight in Honolulu, others would be honoring it at noon in Helsinki, at 6:00 a.m. in Santiago, and 6:00 p.m. in Shanghai – but everyone would share the same exact moment. More than that, the exact time of the equinoxes changes from year to year. This would emphasize the uniqueness of every locality and individual situation – precisely what we need to keep in mind to solve our planetary problems.

After talking with Paul, I felt almost dizzy. The world-holiday concept now existed in satisfying integrity, but timing was the key to putting it in motion.

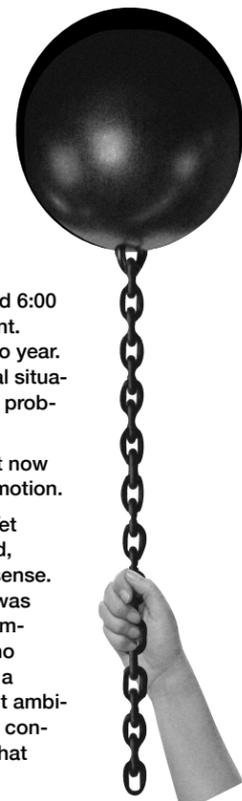
If only application of large ideas were as easy as their formulation! Yet flashes of inspiration and recognition have to be worked out in blood, sweat and tears. Implementation raised issues of timing in another sense. The beginning of the decade of the '70s, when the Age of Aquarius was dawning – I thought that was a perfect time. Art Seidenbaum, a columnist at the Los Angeles Times, put me in touch with Denis Hayes, who was organizing Earth Day for April of that year. And I also learned of a certain John McConnell in New York, who was organizing a small but ambitious event to mark the beginning of spring. Here was someone else contemplating the world-holiday concept – and Denis was organizing what could be its closest approximation to date.

*'Earth Day turned out to be the largest demonstration-like, intentionally educational event the Earth had ever seen, involving something like 20 million people in a dozen countries.'*

Riding the wave of hopefulness of the times, and believing the signs were all excellent, I plunged into organizing. By 1972, I'd formed a nonprofit educational corporation in California, with about 30 other concerned and optimistic people. We called it World Community Events, Inc., and through it we rescheduled Earth Day on the March equinox and another observance, to be called World Life Day, for the September equinox. We organized more than a dozen events in San Diego; Los Angeles; Santa Fe, and Arcosanti, Arizona. John McConnell in New York, coordinating with our efforts on the West Coast, refined his timing and celebrated the March equinox at the precise moment when the sun passed over the equator...I talked Pete Wilson, US Senator from California, into calling for a silent coffee break at the moment of the equinox in San Diego when he was mayor in 1973. It happened to fall a few minutes after 10:00 a.m. Pacific Standard Time that year. Thus was Kirsten's idea of silence observed by several thousand puzzled people: "*The Mayor says we're supposed to contemplate our impact on the Earth and to imagine ways of solving our environmental and energy problems – at the water cooler?!*"

- Richard Register

from an article which first appeared in the Fall 1983 issue of *World's Fair*



## CUBA ON THE ROPES – U.S. HYPOCRISY = “A PERMANENT PANDEMIC AND A CONSTANT HURRICANE”

The U.S. will provide Cuba with \$2 million in emergency relief following Cuba's appeal for aid in the wake of devastation on the island caused by Hurricane Ian.

The aid will be provided indirectly, through the **U.S. Agency for International Development**, and relief organizations such as the **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**. The State Department hastened to add.

The western third of Cuba took a direct hit from Hurricane Ian before it traveled toward the U.S. mainland. Cuba suffered an islandwide loss of electricity, floods and extensive damage. The island was already in the midst of a major economic crisis, including shortages of food and fuel. An earlier natural disaster occurred, just weeks before the hurricane, when a lightning strike hit a major oil storage facility in Matanzas, east of Havana, causing a massive blaze that burned for days, contributing to fuel shortages.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez expressed gratitude for the funds but said the amount pales in comparison to the economic damage to Cuba caused by the U.S. embargo, which he called a **“permanent pandemic”** and a **“constant hurricane.”**

A US State department spokesman said in part “... we will continue to seek ways to provide meaningful support to the Cuban people, consistent with U.S. laws and regulations.” Now archaic laws that had seemed poised to change following a brief U.S.-Cuba reconciliation toward the end of the Obama administration, when diplomatic relations were reestablished and Cuba was taken off the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Donald Trump returned U.S. policy to the antagonistic relations of the past. Expanded travel and business opportunities were canceled, and Cuba was placed back on the list. Although President Biden pledged during his campaign to roll back the Trump reversals, he has only gingerly approached normal-

ization with Havana, in part because of political pressure from the Florida-based Cuban American community and its backers in Congress,

Rodríguez expressed appreciation that the U.S. aid would **“contribute to our recovery efforts and support by those affected by the ravages”** of the storm, but he also pointed out a cause of both continuing privation, and the difficulty of the Cuban government to address it:

**“Between August 2021 and February 2022, the losses caused by the [Cuban] blockade were on the order of \$3.806 billion. It is a record amount, a record for such a short period as these seven months. ... Today the policy of President Joseph Biden's government toward Cuba is regrettable. And it is the same Republican policy; no changes have been introduced in that policy. The surgical design that pursues every income, every source of funding, and supply in the country remains a daily theme.”**

## HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

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Marcia Fudge, secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), told the National Low Income Housing Coalition earlier this year:

**“If we are to fully achieve justice in housing, we must fully accept what that means: justice in housing is everyone realizing the fundamental truth – housing is a human right.”**

It was the first time that a sitting head of HUD has made such a statement, and it represents a major shift in thinking that has yet to inform government policy or percolate into the corporate media's world view.

If housing is a human right as Secretary Fudge says, the government should be enabling community control of the housing market, not corporate control. The so-called market can only be relied upon to prioritize profits, not human rights.

Although there is a public housing system in the United States, overseen by HUD, and intended to ensure that the most vulnerable Americans have homes, the problem is that public housing has been underfunded for decades even

though it has been the primary source of housing for low-income people.

To ensure that the government brings federal housing policy in line with its stated ideal of “housing as a human right,” The Center for Popular Democracy (CPD) released a report entitled **“Social Housing for All: A Vision for Thriving Communities, Renter Power, and Racial Justice.”** Calls on HUD to **“provide \$1 trillion over ten years to fund the construction of 12 million new social and public housing units.”**

CPD wants the government to go further than merely investing in public housing and instead adopt a broader framework of social housing. CPD is calling for a **“mass social housing program,”** that will not only repair the current public housing that exists, but actually create millions of new units for people who actually need it.

### A public option for housing.

In other words, if the private market is making housing out of reach for increasing numbers of people, there ought to be a public option provided by the government to meet the need that the market fails to meet.

Social housing, is permanently affordable, protected from the private market, and publicly owned or under democratic community control. CPD's list of principles of social housing includes deep affordability, tenant unions and collective

bargaining, and quality and accessibility. Given that the current housing crisis disproportionately impacts people of color and women, CPD's vision for social housing is based on racial and gender justice such as requiring that people with criminal backgrounds or immigration violations are not disqualified from accessing housing.

If the federal government is currently fueling a system designed to benefit corporate America, surely it can intervene to benefit people instead.

House Resolution 6989 and Senate 3788, both, introduced in March, are still languishing in committee. The Act would invest \$1 trillion into the housing system.

The **“Homes for All Act”** is intended to **“guarantee safe, accessible, sustainable, and permanently-affordable homes for all, create a true public option and affirm housing as a basic human right for every American.”**

Social housing is hardly a radical idea – There ought to be an alternative to the corporate and for-profit system of housing.

Thanks to

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