

POSIBILIDAD: REINVENTING THE WORLD THROUGH IMAGES, CONVERSATION AND ACTION

A POSIBILIDAD REFLECTION ON THE WORK

BY JIM HARNEY

To put it bluntly these are difficult times; in one respect things are falling apart. If James Joyce were alive, language creation would be pumping in him because of the malfeasance that characterizes our times.

Then we have financial capital, it thrives within a context of the commodification of all life; all that matters is the movement of money around the world and ways to facilitate it. Trade deals help facilitate it. Poor countries don't want foreign capital running through their economic veins and often times brings their economies to suffer massive economic hemorrhages: all of Latin America is blindingly illustrative of this violence.

Most violence goes on within the Service Sector of trade deals: where money duplicates

itself in frightening speed. Corporate largess attempts to push it down the throats of weak economies. The service sector shelters banks, brokerage firms, insurance companies, telecommunications and the tourist industry plus other sectors like fast food, health care and education: the list is long.



Behind powerful financial institutions like the IMF, WB and the WTO - the Capitalist trinity - lies the dollar and unprecedented liquidity that backs it. Understanding globalization from the perspective of capital's

movement around the world helped by the information revolution wedded to the scientific one, allows for the creation of "fictitious money" as some say, others speak of equities and derivatives, but it's removed from life, yet it hovers at the center of where wealth accumulation occurs and at the same time accounts for its joltingly quick disappearance. After the Asian economic collapse it's been said that

equivalent of Canada's GDP in 1997 vanished.

Frank Parnoy, in his important book on Wall Street greed, entitled "Infectious Greed", illustrates in a trenchant way how shaky things are in financial markets: "In August 2002, (stock markets) had lost more than a quarter of their value, destroying more than \$7 trillion of wealth built during the 1990s - roughly \$700,000 of losses for each U.S. household."

Swaths of dislocation and unrest rage as interest rates rise and fall in emerging markets, a user friendly term for investors who find the phrase "Third World" or "Developing Countries," unappealing as bonds go up for sale by battered states seeking revenue to keep their economies afloat; doing it always beholding to the lender of last resort: the IMF. Half the revenue in Argentine banks at the present moment comes from Argentine bonds sold after the December 2001 default. Bonds are part of mainstream wealth creation.

Cornel West talks about "mainstream" and then goes behind it with the term "malstream". Posibilidad's work lies in bringing the Face to our work so that we unravel what's hidden, unspoken and yet hanging over all of us, the "malstream". We burrow into mainstream news, take analysis and offer another take that allows for the "malstream" to surface so that a "contrapuntal" gushes out to use an Edward Said phrase. We critique mainstream media by going to places where human beings speak, live and organize as though their lives depended on it, and which provides an alternative perspective with an opening to converse about life and liberation, our place on the planet in relationship to the Others, the ones that Posibilidad grounds its hope in.

Violence becomes transparent and a bit of

hope surfaces as human beings wrestle with it, deal with it and create community worth its name to challenge the mainstream and discern ways to get to the malstream and transform it.

We're at a creative time: one world dying and another appearing. What's happening in Southern Cone countries we see as a world birthing and capable of standing up to powerful institutions that have tried to unsuccessfully abort that birth.

The acceptable definition of what's normative no longer works and it is one of the principle dilemmas for the problem we're in today.

The Service Sector of the economy, which deal with myriad sectors of the economy and we focus primarily on banks, brokerage firms and telecommunications, provides a trenchant look at how wealth accumulation occurs and why job creation plummets.

Cornel West has a cogent point: "There can be no artistic breakthrough or social progress without some form of crisis in civilization - a crisis usually generated by organizations or collectivities that convince ordinary people to put their bodies and lives on the line."

By showing the Faces of the Others, Posibilidad believes we've cast a seed with germination power that helps build the crisis in civilization West speaks of that is a requirement of any liberation process. Liberation Theologian Jon Sobrino speaks of it in another way: we've passed from the unjust to the inhuman.

Posibilidad welcomes the challenge to reach out to ordinary people. Our multiple presentations offer us access to elementary schools,

high schools and universities, community groups and churches where the “choir” doesn’t hang out. Places where NAFTA, FTAA, the WTO mean little in anything at all.

So we wed theoretical work and intellectual rigor and weave it into dynamic storytelling. So the abstract becomes palatable. We place narratives into packages with bite-size potential to them.

Our programs hinge on Frerian-like facilitation of discussion after a presentation, to bring out “cultural capital”, the affirmation of a human beings history on this planet, validate it, and let her take on the world, and let her gift to be in relationship with others flower.

Posibilidad provides a resource for communities to expand their stories by dynamic language creation as they deal with the “ordinary” around them to discover the “malstream”; deal with it as a learning community, a political community, faith-based communities wrestling with issues that link us to one another and to the earth pulverized by the prioritization of capital over life. The end result: a sensitivity to a power that abides in each human being whom we have a possibility of meeting along the journey we call life. The one Ignacio Ellacuría counseled us would only expand for the better if we heed the urgency to jump into the tension and there find possibility, seize it; and offer it as gift to others as others have offered it as gift to us.



And in the tension we ask the question what constitutes that America that Republicans and Democrats say they defend? Corporate power runs wild in both parties; it has the last word on trade deals and economic policy. It produces a monologue that excludes people and the earth in favor of capital and perpetual economic growth. They comprise the “new war order” that Bush serves as the “War President”. Corporate manifestos proclaim the end of the Golden Age of Capital, and a never to be returned to age when controls on capital contained its fury and mitigated unprecedented pillage.

We deal with issues of harm and hurt. In a corporate utopia, a deregulated world, where capital can do its thing we have 30% of humanity living on less than

a dollar a day. In Argentina we saw some of them. We saw some of them in Mexico, Colombia and in Haiti and in neighboring Dominican Republic that the Financial Times of London says will soon go into default.

In that case of the DR, it has lots to learn from the present Argentine crisis. Around the world 80 million people don’t have adequate diets: in Argentina we saw kids malnourished in a country that is the fourth largest exporter of grain and cattle in the world. One billion people on this planet don’t have clean drinking water. Water is wet gold: humongous profits lie behind it when it is taken away from people as a right. By the year 2015, nine million poor

around the planet will have died from hunger. The Gilded Age of Capital will never be returned; the days of control are a thing of the past we're lead to believe.

This hardness of heart negates the face of the others. Two-hundred-eleven million children between 5 and 14-years-old sweat each day toiling "in the worst conditions" according to the OIT. And 22,000 die from accidents each year. The kids they have no constituents. So few care. In our own country, it's the kids who make up most of the people in poverty. Most of the children of world work in conditions of slavery, in the sex trade and live in the street.

We're in a world where our storytelling has to address growing mega-inequalities attributed to globalization, some say imperialism exercised by the US. CEOs have their salaries increased beyond the economic stratosphere: the spread from those who toil increased by 150 times. These CEOs make up an elite club that controls 70% of world production as heads of transnational corporations with assets that dwarf nation stations.

We take this info and put faces to it and bring them into classrooms with our myriad presentations. The entrance provides a context in which learning communities can wrestle with issues that penetrate our bodies; move beyond statistics to a world of relationship. Relationships, not statistics, drive resistance, question-

ing and forming communities.

Those of us in Posibilidad utilize funds we raise not to gain entrance into the annual DAVOS Conference, where the wealthy meet, but to go where corporate heavies don't go. We travel to where capital shies away from, the edge, the outposts of the empire and talk with those who live and fashion their futures there: they provide a basis for hope.

In January 2003, we widened our work to take in Iraq, with a two-week trip to the Middle East with Voices in the Wilderness.

In December of the same year we set our sites on Argentina. Arundhati Roy explains well why we made the decision to visit both countries in distant parts of the world. "Argentina (is) the model if you want to be the poster boy of neoliberal capitalism, Iraq, if you're the black sheep."

In three weeks in May-June Posibilidad discerned the implications of another model economic showcase in the DR bottoming out.

In Haiti workers tackled the largest apparel Company in the Carribean and Central America due to unjust working conditions as workers declared Huelga-Strike and stoped sewing Levi Straus jeans.

CONTACT US:

Posibilidad
85 Wiley Street
Bangor, ME 04401
207-942-3501

www.posibilidad.org

jimharney@posibilidad.org

