My 9th Day of the Fast for Haiti

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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We are making some inroads with the Fast for Haiti project. But given the usual pattern of corporate news/government spin, as perhaps 200,000 people have perished, the public is being manipulated in the usual ways -- mainly, not to think too deeply, and to limit action to parting with a few dollars. For some reason our democracy does not permit us to question trillions spent on war and Wall Street bailouts, when a tiny fraction of such waste could transform Haiti into a happier, green scene. But there is little profit in permaculture and community-building.

As we do our best to explore the implications of the Haiti disaster we must ask (1) what can this kind of loss and mass deprivation mean to the individual in Consumer Land right now? And (2), how can such a disaster happen on a similar scale in the super-petroleum-dependent, "landless citizen" U.S.?

Activists habitually need to wait patiently for social change and ecological mini-victories. Meanwhile we take stock of what healthy groundwork is being made, despite dangerous downward trentds. The levels we work on include the personal. This report explores that, with a rundown on Culture Change's status influenced by the personal. In so doing this report may help get the reader to a place of evaluating our common condition in society and on our imperiled planet as well.

My fast has been an unexpected break in my normal work productivity. However, a time-out or vacation can assure a renewed, more energetic effort when the routine recommences. After all, we are not machines. We need time to heal and garner our strength for another round of stress and struggle. For the modern world means stress and struggle despite its advantages and amenities.

I have hardly worked on the book Petrocollapse whatsoever. My daughter has been doing some editing daily, but my contribution has been minimal -- strange since the project is almost perfectly finished, and I've felt under pressure to publish the book since November. May the successful completion of the fast bring about new inspiration and energy to finish the book and its publishing details.

I have inexplicably not picked up my guitar once during the whole fast. That is strange because I had just heard a 1973 song, Spirits of the Revolution, by Larry Estridge (Smithsonian Folkways). It hit me that I should simply sing and play "what's me" to get my message out as he did so beautifully. As this fast does its magic and my energy and well-being skyrocket, my interest in picking up the guitar and singing will no doubt return. I've noticed on previous fasts that my voice pitch improves, for a while. I've written some small pieces of music, about half of it rock, since the fast began, and may find time to revisit them and turn them into songs.

On this fast I'm now passing from the can't-do-anything state to the I-want-to get-it-done mood. Evidence of this is that I'm now typing. When the fast opens the floodgates of toxin elimination, a helpless kind of feeling gets to be overwhelming. This is a true water fast, not a juice diet (which can be good for a short duration). In addition to listlessness and self-pity, as the foul taste of toxins in mucus and the occasional vomiting seem endless, one is challenged to get through the day as it crawls by. But there's no easy way out: breaking the fast at that point would be counter-productive -- although a short fast is better than none at all.

Of interest to you more as a Culture Change reader may be that we do have some interesting reports for you, but have not posted them. This is because our staff has been unpaid for a while. We are doing what we can, but I'm the only full-time person currently, and as you know my usual productivity took a turn due to the fast. If we can afford to restore our pay, and better yet add a Managing Editor, our offerings will increase.

I'm glad to fast for Haiti, but I have to admit my timing was initially to save food-money just to make the rent this February 1st. This smacks of failure for an organization that has been around 21 years nonstop. However, this is far from the end, and our greatest hour may be upon us:

• We are gearing up for Sail Transport Network's triumphant provisioning of malted grain to a brewery and the distribution of its organic beer, with the aid of our Pedal Power Produce. Portland is more than ready. My modest sloop is without auxiliary power at the moment, so we are recruiting more boats.

• Haiti Action Committee wrote this to us on Thursday:

"Dear Jan, Thank you so much for your e-mail and letting us know about the Fast for Haiti that you are organizing. It really warms my heart to read about this level of commitment and solidarity, and we'll pass the word along to our partners in Haiti about what you are doing. I'll ask other Haiti Action Committee members if they'd like to join the fast. However, I need to tell you that we are all extremely engaged right now responding to inquiries, requests for speakers, requests from Haiti for aid, disseminating information, etc., so we don't have the capacity at the moment to devote energy to helping organize a fast. I hope you understand-- Very best wishes, and thanks again so much!

Marilyn, Haiti Action Committee

• My book Petrocollapse is looking good, thanks to some helpful suggestions.

• Our ability to attract good material for our website and email subscribers has improved such that our postings are way past being a "Jan Lundberg essay" service. We will be bringing you these diverse articles, and serializing some of my book, as soon as we can.

I'm glad to do this fast, although the reasons for it are not happy ones. But a successful fast turns mediocrity and despair into vigor and joy. When will I break it? There is no play book for fasting in terms of the number of days. I will continue the fast for as long as it makes sense, as long as I'm not "driven mad" by hours straight of hunger -- meaning I must be ready to eat. Total healing through a "finish fast" may have to wait. I have chronic numbness on an area of my leg that would be great to eliminate 100%. My tinnitus might be further reduced. I got rid of my reading glasses in 2006 after an 18 day fast, so I assume I'm strengthening my eyes as I write this.

When you're 57 there's more "fighting off age" than when one is 30. But feeling just as good as in one's youth, being almost as strong, is not a problem if one stays healthy or manages to regain health. I will be grateful for partial improvement in my health, having given it a shot (figuratively). Those who are overweight, full of toxins and hooked on various medical drugs are people I have much compassion for. Convincing them of an alternative has not been one of my successes. Stories about healing have an air of false claim especially to the downtrodden who don't have experience healing themselves. So despite my statements and first-hand experience with my own body and with other fasters I've witnessed, people would rather continue in their misery and fork over big money for treatments that hardly work. It is easy to grasp at a reason or excuse not to fast, often pseudo-scientific.

I wish you all the best in achieving good health. No matter what the state of it is, I hope you take the opportunity, if you never have before experienced it, to find out what it's like to miss a goodly number of meals. The main reason may be preparedness: The average U.S.Anian knows nothing about going without food calmly, and may panic when world events hit home as never before. For our fate in the globalized world is increasingly in the hands of distant places such as Saudi Arabia and China. The White House, Wall Street and the Pentagon are not going to be there for you when a Haiti-earthquake socioeconomic phenomenon results -- in our face instead of "over there." But this is only where we are headed, thanks to our global-warming, oil-guzzling and spendthrift ways.

The health of the land, air and water is inextricably connected to our personal health. We are almost all separated and alienated from the land and nature. We have increasingly become separated and alienated even from our own bodies' needs for good health and survival. It is time to go against the mainstream flow by working on oneself as well as on society and the world.

Thank you for spreading the word of the Fast for Haiti.

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To sign up for the fast and be listed among participants on our website and in emailed lists, contact Jan Lundberg at jan "at" culturechange.org.

Background on the Fast for Haiti and donating food-money for key aid groups is at
 Fast for Haiti to Raise $ for Aid and
 Participants in Fast for Haiti to Raise $ for Aid / Relief Organizations Recommended and
Day 4 of the Fast for Haiti.