

Le Frigo Vert: Electronic Newsletter, November 2006

Messages in this Digest:

1. Le Frigo Vert Updates
2. The Politics of Fair Trade and/or Consumer-based Movements
3. Featured Anti-Oppression Article: "Dust in the Eyes of the World"
4. Recipes: Glorious Green Gumbo w/ Creole Seasoning, Whole Wheat Calzone Dough & 2 kinds of Stuffing. Pumpkin, Chocolate Chip, Walnut Brownies!

1. Le Frigo Vert Updates

On Monday November 6th, the Concordia Food Collective's Annual General Meeting was packed with supporters of the both Le Frigo Vert and the People's Potato projects, and a new, enthusiastic Board of Directors was elected. Thank you everyone who came out to participate! And thank you to all the new and continuing Board members for choosing these projects as worthy of your time. We appreciate all your time and efforts.

Le Frigo Vert

2. The Politics of Fair Trade and/or Consumerist Movements

Consuming Social Justice
by José Johnston

Drinking a cup of justice ? And Justice can taste outstanding.
- advertisement for fairly traded gourmet coffee

A growing number of consumer products in core regions of the global economy are designed and marketed to placate the conscience of the uncomfortable consumer. Everything from ethical mutual funds, to coffee beans, to Nike's "no harm clothing", are presented as part of "alternative" consumption practices that minimize the exploitation of a globalized economy, and promote principles of "fair trade". Following the wave of "environmentally friendly" products, some fair-trade advocates predict a trend towards greater consumer demand for products produced under fair conditions.

The Fair Trade Federation claims that this provides "one of the best alternative models for economically just and sustainable development". Others suggest that fair trade is simply a marketing coup that has captured a conscientious yuppie consumer niche. One Canadian writer, for example, described the growth of "Third World chic" and alternative trade organizations (ATOs) with utter resignation: "Maybe it's true that the best the world's poor can hope for is better pimps for their products".

But can we afford to be so dismissive ? especially in an age where

neo-liberal globalization remains largely unchallenged, consumerism prevails as a dominant source of identities, and lifestyle politics stands out as the most prevalent contemporary form of North American resistance?

This article attempts to move beyond totalizing cynicism, as well as unbridled optimism, towards a more nuanced understanding of fair trade. I explore the contradictions and paradoxes of using consumer practices to build bridges of socio-economic solidarity across core and periphery. More specifically, I want to determine how fair-trade discourse constructs understandings of development, consumerism, and global justice.

A critical but sympathetic viewpoint is essential here, since many fair-trade projects are well intentioned, and there is evidence to suggest that certain peripheral groups benefit from these connections, such as Third World communities which are provided with access to necessary technologies.

What is fair trade?

Although definitions vary, fair trade is generally presented as an alternative to the global trading system. It promotes trade based on relationships of mutual respect and co-operation rather than profit. Trade is based on a fair price, often defined as providing a "living wage" for producers. In addition, fair-trade organizations usually commit to purchasing directly from small producers, providing access to credit and technical assistance, encouraging sustainable environmental practices, establishing long-term relationships with producers based on mutual respect, and supporting democratically run workers' co-operatives.

The fair-trade sector has not evolved in a vacuum. To a significant degree, it is a response to a situation where consumerism and corporate power reign supreme. There is an ever-expanding criterion for consumer "necessities", and there is diminished support for public goods and the taxation system, and relatively little criticism of consumerism as a way of life. While environmentalist doom-sayers warn of impending ecological catastrophes, the dominant indicators of the good life still tend to prioritize consumer goods over happy families or meaningful work. While income inequality grew in the 1980s and 1990s, consumer aspirations for both the poor and the rich expanded. Virtually everybody wanted more stuff.

Some may argue that consumerism is a more diverse, pleasurable phenomena than I am presenting. I would happily concede that there is personal pleasure and even a sense of empowerment in buying new things. Moreover, I do not deny that products are used in ways not intended by their producers. Recognizing micro-spheres of power within consumer culture is clearly important, but this should not blind us to broader patterns of powerlessness and exploitation.

In consumer societies the dominant modus operandi of identity construction

is through our choices as a sovereign consumer. The consumer-sovereignty ideal endorses the general principle underlying market theory: that the pursuit of individual self-interest leads to a greater common good. Each individual, rational consumer looking out for their own interest is not a drain on common resources, but a powerful source of collective good. Under the ideal of consumer sovereignty, when we are poor, it is our choice to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. If our conscience is troubled by our wealth relative to the world's poor, we have a choice to buy fairly traded products.

So while people strive to express their individuality through "sovereign" decisions over certain products, the whole premise of consumerism as a soul-wrenching, ecologically devastating way of life is not rigorously questioned in the mainstream public sphere. Counter-cultural consumption has come to mean consuming differently "not consuming less. Clearly a dramatic reduction in consumption would be impossible without a serious challenge to the dominance of consumer sovereignty in North America. Consumerism and citizenship may not be readily compatible, unless Western citizens go beyond token efforts to embrace the difficult set of choices involved with a resource-responsible global citizenship.

Bearing this in mind, I want to suggest that an alternative to neo-liberal globalism must fulfill minimum criteria. It must be committed to promoting transnational economic democracy based on economic, political, and cultural equality and autonomy; it must be underpinned by a practice of citizenship based on equal access to resources, cultural identities and democratic projects; and it must be sustainable.

To what extent does fair trade fulfill these criteria for an effective alternative to neo-liberal globalism?

A useful starting point to answer this question is by a careful analysis of the claims of fair-trade organizations themselves. TransFair USA defines its agenda ambitiously as being to "redefine the producer-consumer relationship", claiming that, "Fair trade can and will connect issues of global poverty with the negative externalities of American consumerism and produce new, powerful and productive relationships".

These are clearly good intentions, which seem beyond reproach or criticism. Contradictions arise, however, when these good intentions are translated into appeals to sell fair-trade products in consumer societies like those of North America. There are three particularly troubling contradictions, or themes, that cast doubt on the potential of fair-trade discourse to provide a counter-politics to neo-liberalism. The first is an unquestioned support for consumer sovereignty. The second concerns support for micro-lifestyle politics over politicized, public-sphere awareness. The third relates to the way in which fair trade can sometimes, perhaps unintentionally, normalize underdevelopment and over-consumption. I want to deal with each in turn.

Consumer sovereignty: thirty-two flavors and then some

A focus on individual choice and consumer sovereignty is a persistent theme in fair-trade discourse – a theme that makes for some rather strange bedfellows. Political leaders throughout the industrialized world have been able to use ideals of consumer sovereignty to identify with the feelings of the “masses”. Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, for example, presented the model of consumer choice as an adequate framework for all forms of citizenship. A similar idea of “voting with your dollar” is heavily emphasized in fair-trade discourse. Fair-trade seminars often end on this inspirational note – “You have a vote! It’s right there in your wallet!” This moral imperative to vote in the market place was not accompanied by discussion, or even recognition of the skewed distribution of “votes” (dollars) in consumer society. The valorization of consumer sovereignty was also revealed in the emphasis on the range of goods, their convenience, and the assurance of the high quality provided.

The Bridgehead fair-trade catalogs, for example, reported that their “goals looking forward” were to provide consumers with “more stores and more selection”. Traditional development goals – eliminating poverty, reducing technological dependence and so forth – are apparently self-evident to Bridgehead catalog shoppers. TransFair USA stressed that before consumers will buy fairly traded coffee, they have to be shown that there is “no compromise in product quality”, and “easy availability, that is, no trips to special stores”.

While one might contend that “choice” is a natural part of doing business in a market society, what is interesting in the case of fair trade, a self-declared alternative to exploitative trade relations, is how consumer sovereignty discourse is so thoroughly embraced. In fact, one of the stated goals of fair-trade organizations is to develop relationships with producers to help them adapt to the changing styles, trends, and preferences of First World consumers.

The overall effect is to create a powerful justification for a globalized world where a small elite has the right to choose between the best products that the world’s cultures have to offer. This elite also has the right to change its mind when certain trends and goods become passé. This world is not presented as objectionable, but is ironically given a veneer of morality since “choices” are made in the name of fair trade and development. Although the rhetoric of consumer sovereignty is a realistic sales strategy, it is troublesome at a deeper level.

This emphasis on choice obscures the production side of the commodity equation, and the associated inequalities. Although the very idea of a fair-trade product draws the consumers’ eye to the notion of unfair global production processes, it is possible that most people who buy these products absorb very little information about the production process, perhaps only a short paragraph on the side of a bag of coffee.

The producers of the beautiful, handcrafted items are shown in only a few places in the Bridgehead catalog, and these depictions are designed to produce minimal anxiety and maximum satisfaction for the consumer choosing between hundreds of products.

The emphasis on the extreme range of choices available to consumers also obscures the paucity of choices available to producers, who are often driven to produce handicrafts when they are forced off their land. It is assumed that the choice for producers is to either remain impoverished, or produce goods for the fair-trade market. Local self-sufficiency, shortening food links, or de-linking from the global economy are not presented as viable choices. The imperative is to produce as quickly and efficiently as possible.

An ideal of consumer-sovereignty naturalized for North American consumers also presents a narrow notion of choice available to would-be citizens. Political action is reduced to a choice between doing nothing, and buying a product. The realm of political action is confined to the market place. The primary choice for potential consumers is between brands. Absent here is the choice of not buying, or engaging in other types of political action. Although they might give the consumer the moral satisfaction of helping a women's pottery co-operative in India, these purchases do not challenge the practices, or relative power of the high consumption lifestyle.

The greatest ideological abuse of the notion of 'choice' is when it obscures the persistence of social inequality. In consumer cultures choice is typically depicted as a great social equalizer, destroying group boundaries and creating a world where everyone has a 'vote'. The language of 'mutual-respect' between 'equal trading partners' used in the fair-trade literature has a similar effect, blending together the sharp economic and social differences between the producers and consumers of the products.

Besides obscuring producer-consumer power differentials, the inequality amongst North American consumers is also hidden from view. The commonly used phrase, 'as consumers, we can make a difference', paints a picture of a homogeneous mass of equal participants in the market place. The ability to pay the fair-trade premium price becomes a matter of individual willpower and morality, instead of the socio-economic issue that it is for less wealthy North American consumers.

This leads us to another problem with the choice metaphor - it has no way of distinguishing degrees of control over choices. The consumer sovereignty ideal presents consumers as either free choosers, or manipulated dupes - not a very sophisticated portrayal of the subtle moral issues involved in political action. What is not recognized within this simplistic perspective are gradations and forms of autonomous choice, such as the language of citizenship and collective action, an issue to which I will now turn.

Lifestyle politics and a diminished public sphere: from boycott to 'buycott'?

Fair-trade literature is also characterized by the absence of reference to discussions of politics, economics, capitalism, and democracy. Like the discourse of the New Right, fair-trade discourse appears to accept the focus on consumer identities over political and public identities as natural and inevitable. The potential of the public sphere as an arena of critical reflection is thus minimized, as public communication is predominantly organized around market transactions.

Calls to 'action' frequently begin with phrases like the following: 'As consumers, our purchasing choices also have a global impact?'. On the 10,000 Villages home page, seven suggestions of 'how you can help?' are listed. Aside from prayer, the suggestions revolve entirely around the retail experience.

This is a telling example of the de-politicization of global inequality, and a fairly typical depiction of political action in the fair-trade literature. When consumers are urged to lobby their government, it is to promote the use of fair-trade coffee in the government coffee shops 'not to lobby for political changes that would make Southern producers less vulnerable like lobbying for the reduction of Third World debt or fighting corporate rights agreements like the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, or to make North American governments more accountable to their citizens.

Nevertheless, most of the fair-trade literature is highly ambitious about the scope of change that would occur through fair trade, and about the power of lifestyle politics.

Small changes are presented as making a big difference. TransFair USA states this very specifically, supporting a shift in focus from 'boycotts' to 'buycotts'.

While the focus on individual choice here is clearly a sensible sales pitch, it also tends to minimize the accountability of the state and corporations for the public good. The individual is encouraged to take responsibility for global injustice, but in most cases action is limited to purchasing fair-trade products. Fair trade assuages your conscience, and makes your house appear more hip and worldly. Individual lifestyle politics is key. Forget about challenging larger organizations like governments and corporations. Justice can fit into your daily lifestyle.

The danger here is that fair trade is ripe for corporate co-optation of the public's genuine desire to see the end of sweatshop labor and other exploitative practices. Nike's 'no-harm' clothing campaign is simply one of the more public, sophisticated variants on this theme. I first became aware of the NO HARM CLOTHING slogan on a trip to Los Angeles in July 1999 where it was used to promote the Beverly Hills Nike World super-store. Reading the fine print beneath the 'No-Harm' clothing, however, seemed to

indicate only that the clothing would not harm the person wearing it.

Alternatively, fair trade can simply become a superficial brush with the exotic 'Other'. In the inside of the Bridgehead catalog, the Managing Director calls on the viewer to take part in a neo-colonial mail-order experience: 'We invite you to bring the world home'. Although appeals to capture the exotic are not always this literal, the fair-trade goods themselves contain important messages about global inequalities and North American desires to possess a piece of the exotic Other.

What message, for example, is conveyed by owning a hand-dyed indigo duvet cover from India? What lies behind the desire for a 'Kathmandu Carpet' from Nepal, or a set of 'wonderfully ornate maracas' from Peru? Clearly the consumption of these goods has many meanings, including simple appreciation for an aesthetically pleasing handicraft. However, it also seems clear that beneath the attractive veneer of fair-trade chic there continues a long Western tradition of placing the Other safely within one's reach, while at the same time maintaining the extreme power differential separating core consumers from peripheral producers.

All of this leads to unanswered questions about the political efficacy of the lifestyle politics of consumerism. When I go to a Third World craft store and buy a Zapatista doll (made by Guatemalans in Mexico city) for US\$8.50, what am I really contributing to the plight of impoverished campesinos in Southern Mexico? If anything, the availability of such items creates a false sense of solidarity with life or death struggles, and allows the analytical gaze to wander away from the ways in which my lifestyle and my citizenship are connected to the Zapatista struggles. The North American Free Trade Agreement, the inter-continental arms trade, the pillage of Chiapanecan resources, the degradation of indigenous rights across North America - these important issues are nowhere to be found when I take my Zapatista doll and credit card up to the cash register.

This brings us to a third and final theme of this article - the balance between education and normalization in fair-trade discourse.

Normalizing over-consumption and underdevelopment

Fair-trade discourse offers an important opportunity for education about the complex factors underlying underdevelopment. Although attempts at development education are a key part of fair-trade discourse, the strange juxtaposition of core choice and peripheral poverty works to normalize over-consumption and underdevelopment, stifling the possibilities for critical public discussion on these issues.

Nowhere is this juxtaposition of over-consumption and underdevelopment more evident than in the glossy pages of the Bridgehead fair-trade catalog. Although Bridgehead will send more details of their projects on request, their major marketing tool is the catalog. The catalog is beautifully produced on glossy paper with stunning photographs, and an

extensive array of goods. Bridgehead wants to impress upon potential customers the importance of ethical consumption, but it does not want to scare them off either. Your purchases are intended to promote development, yet the catalog images do not inspire any sense of the need for urgent action to combat global inequality, the impoverishment of the Fourth World, or over-development in North America. Instead, these images are designed to promote a sense of urgency about buying something.

Besides this visual normalization, the fair-trade concept itself tends to normalize and give moral legitimacy to the idea that some populations should produce products according to the desires and whims of other populations. The whole notion of what is fair is revealing. The meaning of fair for Alternative Trade Organizations ranges from mutual respect, to a living wage, to the country's minimum wage. Nowhere is it suggested that producers should ideally be paid at a level befitting the labor of North American consumers, and nowhere is it suggested that the core consumer should be consuming at the level befitting the producers of the goods. So fair in the discourse seems not to imply a global democracy of citizens with equal economic and political rights, but a global trading system of inequality, albeit with a more human face. The goal of fair trade remains confined to helping the poor through fair-trade practices all without addressing the living conditions of the world's elite.

Although the fair-trade organizations vary in their presentation of global inequality, the discourse tends to present a sugar-coated liberal vision where everyone has an equal voice, and where global citizenship has already been achieved. Fair trade is a development solution where everybody wins: the First World consumer gets a hand-crafted item along with a clear-conscience, while the producers get an improved standard of living. TransFair USA describes the benefits of fair trade as follows: "In a global village, we prosper as our less fortunate neighbors prosper". Nations become neighbors, and we accept that some nations (neighbors) are naturally more fortunate than others. The causes underlying global inequality, such as imperialism, neo-imperialism, trade advantages and the debt crisis, disappear in this quaint metaphor.

The notion that natural resources are limited, and that the First World neighbors gobble up a disproportionate share of the global commons, is also implicitly accepted.

Respect, and even sustainable development, can be produced with a simple purchase as an equally empowered citizen of the world. Even though handicraft production is often one of the last options available to landless peasants in dire need of land reform, the Fair Trade Federation defends the production of non-essential items as an important part of developing fair-trade relations:

Clothing, utensils, bowls, baskets, and ritual items are windows into the heart of a culture. As we embrace becoming citizens of the world, our

appreciation for cultures other than our own is magnified.

The hopeful vision of global multiculturalism supports diversity with little recognition of inequality. Global consumers perhaps, but not global citizens with equal economic resources or political rights.

This is not to say that efforts at education are not made by fair-trade organizations. Some organizations, such as Equal Exchange, provide a wide variety of informative articles on their web site and in their Java Jive newsletter. In contrast to the glossy images of their catalogs, Bridgehead also produces a photocopied newsletter, Bean Around the Block, which includes inspiring quotations on political action, and even a call for political action protesting militarization in Chiapas.

But most fair-trade education efforts reflect the contradictions I outlined above: an emphasis on consumer sovereignty, and a focus on fair trade as the most important solution to global inequality. Consumers are to be educated to consume "differently"; there is no mention of encouraging consumers to consume less, or to engage in the world as citizens. Education is optional, and ultimately subservient to the goal of consumption.

Opportunities and the public sphere

At the same time as these contradictions emerge, it is important to emphasize that no discourse is homogeneous. The separation between citizens and consumers is not rigid or absolute. There are hopeful instances where the issues behind fair trade are effectively politicized as public issues rather than purely private, lifestyle issues, giving rise to the possibility of an expanded, more informed public sphere.

Some groups, for instance, are taking up the project of radical education in a more profound way, such as the "10 days for global justice campaign" in Canada. Because the organizers are a broad, ecumenical group and not an alternative trade organization, the goal to educate citizens about development issues remains central and primary, while the lifestyle issues surrounding fair-trade products are presented as a partial solution. One education tool, a page of four post-cards, highlights the possibilities for addressing consumption issues in a more politicized fashion. One post-card is addressed to the Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, and calls for an end to sweat-shop conditions. Another card is addressed to "myself and my household", calling on the reader to avoid excessive consumption and to challenge the Canadian government to protect workers' rights at home and around the world.

Another promising instance of fair trade in the public sphere was the recent resolution by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to declare 8 May as Fair Trade Day in that city. Not only did the resolution declare the city's opposition to "unregulated economic globalization in its current state", but it also made a commitment to support "fair trade,

socially responsible investment, and sustainable and equitable economic development?. In contrast to the emerging globalism, which gives corporations universal rights of entry and access to global markets, the San Francisco resolution reasserted the rights of citizen bodies to set public priorities. To do this, the resolution relied on the Commerce Clause of the US Constitution which allows public entities to "place restrictions on the use of public funds?". The fair-trade issue in this case was taken on by a level of government, and transcended the scope of individual shopping decisions.

Another example of positive correlation between fair trade and a democratic public sphere is found in the International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT). IFAT holds biennial conferences for producers and alternative trade organizations to exchange information and viewpoints in a non-commodified context. This venue has hosted important debates on what qualifies as fair trade, creating fair-trade criteria for coffee, and supporting debates around criteria for other products. Instead of working to destroy the competition, alternative trade organizations commit to an alternative co-operative ethic of business based on maximizing benefits to producers.

Although these organizations are still minor players in the scheme of global trading, businesses able to defy conventional logic and combine social values with viable business ventures can provide a powerful moral counter-point to the dominant logic of neo-liberalism.

Conclusion: potential and pitfalls of the shopping strategy

Consumer-solidarity strategies based on alternative principles like fair trade have the potential to both challenge and accommodate the dominant ideology and practices of consumerism and neo-liberal globalization. Fair-trade discourse may also undermine commodity fetishism by forcing consumers to consider factors of production usually shrouded from view. Consideration of production can lead to a questioning of inequitable labor relations, the sustainability of core consumer practices, and can encourage a reorientation away from consumerism and towards socially engaged citizenship.

At the same time, the fair-trade discourse continues within a long-standing mode of regulation within advanced capitalism, and does not perfectly fulfill the criteria for a counter-politics based around collective action outlined above. The discourse of fair trade tends to rely on individualistic notions of choice and consumer sovereignty, obscures the structural linkages between core and periphery in a globalized economy, and belies the collective environmental implications of individual free choice in the market place. Because of its unwillingness to critically assess the consumerism of its customers, fair-trade discourse supports a liberal vision of difference without a serious discussion of inequality, or the emotional and intellectual barriers to sustainability.

Building alternative identities derived from conscientious consumption may be a more realistic strategy than expecting collective identities of citizenship to spontaneously emerge from thin air. Although there is no inevitable transition, conscientious consumption could serve as a conduit to a broader notion of citizenship, where an obsessive focus on individual choice, is replaced, or at least supplemented with a broader notion of community, sustainability, justice, and democracy.

3. Anti-Oppression Article: “Dust in the Eyes of the World”

“Dust in the Eyes of the World” : Feminists debate logic of “humanitarian” war

by Anna Carastathis

The Dominion: News from the Grassroots

October 19, 2006

Is the military deployment in Afghanistan - which some Afghan feminists are calling an occupation- improving the lives of women?

The claim that the war in Afghanistan will liberate Afghan women has been circulating since before the bombs began to drop, on October 7, 2001. By mid-October of that year--the day before World Food Day--the UN High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 7.5 million Afghans had no access to food and were at risk of starvation. A few months later, on January 29, 2002, during his State of the Union address, George Bush jubilantly declared: “Today, women are free and are part of Afghanistan’s new government.” In July 2006, it was reported that the war had created 2.2 million refugees and at least 153,200 internally displaced people. It is estimated that between 12,541 and 25,308 Afghan people have died in the war.

Global opposition to the invasion of Iraq was mobilized even before the war began; by contrast, the war in Afghanistan, spun as a humanitarian effort, is the war relatively few Canadians seem to want to--or know how to--audibly oppose. Canadians take pride in themselves for not following the United States into an illegal war in Iraq, but not many questions were raised about Canada taking over the US mandate in Afghanistan (which allowed the US to focus its military and resources in Iraq). Part of the reason for this is that the war in Afghanistan - named ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ - was, from the beginning, promoted as war that would restore the women’s rights by deposing the Taliban.

In a recent article published in the Winnipeg Free Press, Penni Mitchell, a prominent Canadian feminist who is managing editor of the national feminist magazine Herizons, suggests that the war in Afghanistan is doing just that. In fact, Mitchell argues that the Conservative government is failing to make the same commitment to human rights in its domestic policy that is embodied in its deployment in Afghanistan, referring to the

government's decision to close the Court Challenges Program, which provided litigation support to individuals seeking to challenge a federal law on the grounds that it contravened the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Mitchell writes: "Human rights of linguistic minorities and women are worth Canadians fighting for in Afghanistan, but advancing the rights of minorities and women in Canada's courts are a luxury Ottawa says it can little afford." In an article published on October 15 in *The Toronto Star*, Linda McQuaig points to the same disjunction. Referring to Harper's attack on Status of Women Canada, emblematic of his socially regressive domestic policy, McQuaig quips: "for women, the good news is - burqas are out. The bad news is - so are careers [for Canadian women]."

At present, 2,300 Canadian soldiers are stationed in Afghanistan, of whom approximately 2,000 are actively engaged in combat as part of the International Security Assistance Force, currently led by a Canadian general. In an interview with *The Dominion*, Mitchell acknowledged that "Canada should re-focus its mission" in Afghanistan, and said, "It is clear that women in Afghanistan want greater security, they want girls to be able to attend school, they want a justice system that will protect them, not warlords who will rule by violence and intimidation."

But the question is, will the military deployment - which some Afghan feminists are calling an occupation- achieve these ends? When I pose this question to Rokhsana Bahramitash, she asks, by way of reply: "What is the historical evidence to show that war has ever liberated women?"

Bahramitash is a feminist scholar at the Centre for Developing-Area Studies at McGill University and at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute at Concordia University, who produced a documentary on Afghan women, "Beyond the Burqa," in 2004. She says that the notion that the US and Canada are emancipating Afghan women by bombing them is a dangerous fiction produced by a "war propaganda machine" that feminists need to undermine. She worries that some feminists have forgotten the historical roots of the North American feminist movement in anti-militarist and anti-racist struggles, and are now "supporting a neoconservative agenda."

Rather than positing Canadian military intervention as the solution to Afghan women's problems, Bahramitash urges feminists to make connections between Canada's foreign policy and its domestic policy. Unlike Mitchell, who sees a contradiction between Harper's domestic and foreign policies, Bahramitash argues that both emerge from the same ideology: "The policies are not separate. Neoliberalism [at home] and neo-conservatism [abroad] are part of the same package." To see this, Bahramitash suggests that we need a feminist analysis that sees that race, class and war are inseparable factors in women's experiences. And we need to understand how, transnationally, feminist struggles are unified. Take, for example, the issue of participation in formal political institutions. "As a feminist," Mitchell says, "I do consider that having women occupy 28 per cent of seats in [the Afghan] government is? an improvement." It's not clear, however, that Canada has much to teach Afghan civil society in this regard; only 20.8 per cent of members of the Canadian Parliament are women.

“To assume that the struggles for women’s rights are fundamentally different is a major problem,” Bahramitash says. Also dangerous is the assumption that Western women or governments know what Afghan women’s actual needs are. Bahramitash warns that feminist support for the Canadian military deployment in Afghanistan “feeds into Islamophobia” because it is based on the paternalistic “Orientalist assumption that Muslim women are victims (not agents) who need their Western sisters to help them,” says Bahramitash. Instead of attempting to define Afghan women’s needs, Bahramitash says that Canadian feminists need to pressure their own government to “change its mandate from military deployment to peacekeeping” and to re-allocate the resources it currently expends on the war to reconstruction, human security and decommissioning of weapons. In this, she echoes the concrete demands of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), which has been mobilizing Afghan women in resistance to war and occupation since 1977.

Ultimately, Bahramitash suggests, Canadian feminists need to relate to Afghan women as “agents of transformation” of their own conditions. After all, as RAWA puts it, “Real emancipation of women can be realized only by themselves.” To claim otherwise, they say, is just “throwing dust into the eyes of the world.”

4. Vegan Recipes

Glorious Green Gumbo

2 Quarts water
1 lb. collard greens, washed well, destemmed, and roughly chopped (or 1 - 10 oz. pkg. frozen)
1 lb. turnip greens, washed well, destemmed, and roughly chopped (or 1 - 10 oz. pkg. frozen)
1 lb. kale, washed well, destemmed, and roughly chopped (or 1 - 10 oz. pkg. frozen)
1 lb. spinach, washed well, destemmed, and roughly chopped (or 1 - 10 oz. pkg. frozen)
1/4 cup safflower oil
1/4 cup unbleached flour
1 1/2 cups onion, diced
1 cup celery, diced
1 cup green pepper, destemmed, deseeded, and diced
2 T. garlic, minced
3 cups cabbage, shredded
1 T. Creole Seasoning
1/2 t. salt
1 bay leaf
4 cups water
2 cups brown rice, rinsed
1/4 cup freshly chopped parsley
1/4 cup nutritional yeast flakes

Tabasco sauce or other hot sauce, for garnishing

In a large saucepan, place the 2 Quarts of water, and bring to a boil. Cook the collard greens in the boiling water for 2-3 minutes to blanch them. Using a slotted spoon, remove the collard greens from the boiling water, place them in a large bowl, and set aside. Cook the turnip greens, kale, and spinach in the same manner, and add to the bowl of collard greens. If using frozen greens, cook them individually in the boiling water until thawed, then remove them with a slotted spoon, and place them in a large bowl for later use. Set the cooking liquid aside for use in the gumbo.

In a large pot, stir together the oil and flour to form a roux. Cook the roux over medium heat, while stirring constantly for 20-30 minutes, or until it is a golden (nutty) color. Add the onion, celery, green pepper, and garlic, stir well to combine, and cook an additional 5-7 minutes or until the vegetables are soft. Slowly, stir a little of the greens' cooking liquid into the roux-vegetable mixture, blending them thoroughly together, and then stir in the remaining cooking liquid. Add the reserved greens, cabbage, Creole Seasoning, salt, and bay leaf, and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce the heat to low, and simmer for 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, bring the 4 cups water to a boil. Add the brown rice, stir well, cover, reduce the heat to low, and simmer for 45 minutes or until the water is absorbed. Remove the saucepan from the heat, leave covered, and set aside for 10 minutes to allow the rice to steam. After the gumbo has simmered for 45 minutes, add the parsley and nutritional yeast, and simmer an additional 5 minutes. Taste and add additional Creole Seasoning or salt, if needed. Serve the gumbo in bowls over the brown rice, and garnish individual servings with a little Tabasco sauce, if desired.

* Note: you can substitute other fresh or frozen greens of choice such as, Swiss chard, mustard greens, beet greens, or escarole.

Serves 8

Creole Seasoning

3 T. paprika
2 T. garlic powder
2 T. onion powder
1 T. dried basil
1 T. dried oregano
1 T. cayenne pepper
1 T. freshly ground black pepper
1 T. white pepper
1 1/2 t. dried thyme
1 t. dry mustard

In a small bowl, stir together all of the ingredients. Store in an airtight container in a cool place.

Yield: 3/4 cup

Whole Wheat Calzone Dough

1 1/3 cups warm water (110 degrees)

3 T. olive oil

1 - 1/4 oz. pkg. active dry yeast

1 3/4 cups whole wheat flour

1 3/4 cups unbleached flour

1 1/2 t. salt

olive oil

In a food processor, place the warm water, olive oil, and yeast, and process for 30 seconds to combine. Allow the mixture to sit for 10 minutes or until foamy. Add both types of flour and salt, and process an additional 1 minute or until the dough comes together to form a ball.

Transfer the dough to a floured work surface and knead the dough for 5-7 minutes or until smooth and elastic. Lightly oil a large bowl with a little olive oil, transfer the ball of dough to the bowl, and roll the dough around the inside of the bowl to thoroughly coat it with the oil.

Cover the bowl with a clean towel, place it in a warm place, and leave the dough to rise for 1 hour or until doubled in bulk.

After the dough has doubled in size, punch down the dough, and turn it out onto a floured work surface. Knead the dough a few times, place the bowl over the top of the dough, and leave it to rest for 20 minutes. Divide the dough into 8 pieces. Using a rolling pin, roll out each piece of dough to form a 6-inch circle. Place filling of choice on one half of each circle of dough, leaving a 1/2-inch border around the edge. Brush a little water around the edge of each circle of dough. Fold the dough over to enclose the filling, crimp the edges closed with your fingers, and then fold up the edges a 1/2-inch to form a decorative border.

Enough for 8 Calzones

Broccoli, Red Pepper and Walnut Calzone Filling

1/2 recipe of Whole Wheat Calzone Dough

1/2 cup walnuts

2 cups broccoli, cut into small florets

1 cup red pepper, destemmed, deseeded, and diced

1 t. olive oil

1 T. nutritional yeast flakes

1 T. lemon juice

1 t. dried dillweed

salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Prepare the Whole Wheat Calzone Dough according to the recipe instructions through the rolling out procedures. Cover the 4 rolled out calzones with a clean towel so that they won't dry out while preparing the filling. In a non-stick skillet, place the walnuts, and cook over medium heat for 3-5 minutes or until lightly toasted and fragrant. Transfer the toasted walnuts to a small bowl and set aside to cool completely. In the same skillet, saute the broccoli and red pepper in the olive oil for 2 minutes to soften. Roughly chop the cooled walnuts. Add the walnuts, along with the remaining ingredients, to the skillet. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper, and saute the mixture an additional 2-3 minutes or until the vegetables are crisp tender. Remove the skillet from the heat, set aside, and allow the mixture to cool slightly.

Divide the filling evenly among the rolled out calzones, placing it on one half of each circle of dough and leaving a 1/2-inch border around the edge. Brush a little water around the edge of each circle of dough. Fold the dough over to enclose the filling, crimp the edges closed with your fingers, and then fold up the edges a 1/2-inch to form a decorative border. Transfer the filled calzones to a non-stick cookie sheet and bake at 450 degrees for 20 minutes or until golden brown. Allow the calzones to cool for a few minutes before serving. Can be served warm, cold, or at room temperature.

Yield: 4 Calzones

Marinara Medley Calzone Filling

1/2 recipe of Whole Wheat Calzone Dough
3/4 cup onion, diced
3/4 cup green peppers, destemmed, deseeded, and diced
1 t. olive oil
1/2 cup mushrooms, cut in half, and sliced
1/2 cup zucchini, cut into quarters lengthwise, and sliced
2 t. garlic, minced
3/4 cup cooked chickpeas
1/2 cup tomato sauce
1 T. nutritional yeast flakes
1/2 t. dried basil
1/4 t. dried oregano
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Prepare the Whole Wheat Calzone Dough according to the recipe instructions through the rolling out procedures. Cover the 4 rolled out calzones with a clean towel so that they won't dry out while preparing the filling. In a non-stick skillet, saute the onion and green pepper in the olive oil for 2 minutes to soften. Add the mushrooms, zucchini, and garlic, and saute the mixture an additional 3 minutes. Add the remaining ingredients, season the mixture to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper, reduce the heat to low, and simmer the mixture for 2 minutes to blend the flavors. Remove the skillet from the heat, set aside, and allow the mixture to cool

slightly.

Divide the filling evenly among the rolled out calzones, placing it on one half of each circle of dough and leaving a 1/2-inch border around the edge. Brush a little water around the edge of each circle of dough. Fold the dough over to enclose the filling, crimp the edges closed with your fingers, and then fold up the edges a 1/2-inch to form a decorative border. Transfer the filled calzones to a non-stick cookie sheet and bake at 450 degrees for 20 minutes or until golden brown. Allow the calzones to cool for a few minutes before serving. Can be served warm, cold, or at room temperature.

Yield: 4 Calzones

Pumpkin, Chocolate Chip and Walnut Brownies!

2 cups unbleached flour
2 cups Sucanat (or brown sugar from sugar beets)
1 T. orange zest
1 T. baking powder
1 t. cinnamon
2/3 cup vegan margarine
2 T. water
1 T. Ener-G Egg Replacer
2 cups pumpkin puree
1 1/2 t. vanilla
2 cups vegan chocolate chips or carob chips
safflower oil, for oiling pan
1/2 cup walnuts, roughly chopped

In a large bowl, stir together the flour, sugar, orange zest, baking powder, and cinnamon. Using a pastry blender or a fork, cut in the margarine until the mixture resembles fine crumbs. In a small bowl, whisk together the water and egg replacer for 1 minute or until very frothy. Add the egg replacer mixture, pumpkin puree, and vanilla to the flour mixture, and stir well to combine. Fold in the chocolate chips. Using a little safflower oil, lightly oil (or mist with oil) a 9x13-inch baking pan. Pour the batter into the prepared pan, spread it out evenly, and then sprinkle the chopped walnuts over the top. Bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes or until an inserted toothpick comes out clean. Allow the brownies to cool in the pan for several minutes and then cut into small squares. Store in an airtight container.

Yield: One 9x13-inch pan