

Social Justice Literacy Quiz

social justice literacy quiz: for Christian Women and other people of faith



connect the dots!

This Primer was inspired by discussions and experiences during the
Rural Women's Gathering in Mexico Nov 1-5, 2007.

Organized by Agricultural Missions, Inc (AMI)

and

The Rural Coalition

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Introduction: *Mictlan and the Kingdom of God*



In early November 2007 twenty five women from Grenada, El Salvador, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and various regions of the U.S. gathered in Mexico City for Day of the Dead celebrations, to initiate their five day gathering to discuss rural and agricultural problems from a gender perspective, and envision how rural women might act to further their goals and strengthen their communities, families and rural economies, and educate people from the north on the difficulties they face with food security and sovereignty. They were farmers, rural organizers, women representing their church denominations, indigenous women, young and mature, black, brown and white, speaking Spanish and English.

What they found in the Zócalo, the giant central square of the Federal District (D.F.) was in some ways inscrutable, but in other ways they were seeing through open doors into a complex history and worldview, a cosmivision, as well as into the often brutal realities of people of the land in struggles of life or death.

“I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and have laid my strength in the dust. My face is red with weeping, and on my eyelids is deep darkness; although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure. “O earth, cover not my blood, and let my cry find no resting place. Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he that vouches for me is on high.” Job 16: 15-19

A group of indigenous peoples from the coast, hundreds of people, men and women, lining the streets leading into and gathered in the Zócalo, were protesting their on-going eviction from their ancestral lands, and the high cost of corn due to its diversion to ethanol production. To communicate the full tragedy and anguish of their protest, they had removed all their clothing, men and women, demanding the return of their land, as if saying: we have been reduced to this. We are as nothing without our Mother Earth, our Madre Tierra. Can there be any doubt that justice is required! To paraphrase Job: "O earth, cover not our blood...let our cry find no resting place."

Chilo Villareal, Rural Coalition staff member and hostess of the Women's Gathering, introduced the significance and meaning of the Day of the Dead celebration. The Day of the Dead takes place on All Saints Day (Nov 1) and All Souls Day (Nov 2). The Zócalo, is considered by some the "heart of Mictlan" the mythical world one visits after a natural death, where only abundance, justice and peace reign, where people are reunited with their deceased loved ones. People clean up and decorate the graves of their dead loved ones. Lydia Hernandez, ordained Presbyterian pastor and Mexican American of indigenous ancestry who participated in the gathering and helped interpret the experience, explained that this is a "remembering" and honoring, not a veneration of the dead. Her view is that Mictlán is similar to the Christian concept of "the Kingdom of God" a place of resurrection and unity.

This is why food is left out for the dead to eat: beans, fermented corn porridge 'atol,' tobacco, chiles, all the fruits of the harvest. A special kind of marigold is displayed, the *zempasúchil*. Candles are lit and kept burning to light the way for the souls. Just as the crops come out of decay and rot (dead vegetation as fertilizer), life comes out of death. The food is consumed by people after the celebration. Chilo spoke of the "tree of life", an ancient symbol of the indigenous cosmivision, as originating in Mictlán. Pumpkins, used in the All Saints Day (Halloween) celebrations in the U.S., also figure in Day of the Dead, as a symbol of Earth.

Culturally Mexicans tend to speak of death in a more intimate manner than the average U.S. person. As among peoples of African origin, it is natural for Mexicans to celebrate, and not just mourn, the passing from life to death. There are common sayings that reflect this intimacy: *Naciste para morir*, you are born to die. Life is viewed as a passageway, with death viewed as the next stage of existence. "Life is a dream. When you die, you wake up."

This sort of down to earth view of death, this earthy mysticism has been the strength of indigenous and campesino cultures across the Americas. Mexicans who believe in the life/death/rebirth continuum recognize it, mock it, even defy it. Death is part of life and, as such, it's representative of the Mexican spirit and tradition which say: "Don't take anything lying down - even death!"

The Rural Women gathered in Mexico Nov 1-5, 2007 to share their lives and seek common ground in their collective struggles for rural well-being had some of this spirit too: they were not taking anything lying down, even the struggle to restore harmony and abundance to the lives of people of the land. Their discussions ranged over many terrains, discerning how they are inter-connected. These range from concepts such as economic imperialism, and how that impacts people around the world in terms of agricultural practices, corporate-led deregulation of trade and economic policy, impoverishment and resultant forced immigration, the privatization of the common goods of nature and the struggle to maintain biodiversity and the integrity of Creation, and cross-cutting it all, the role gender equity plays in transforming these realities. This social justice literary quiz is inspired by that spirit and the experience, sharing and collective reflection of the women!



Mind and heart-bending facts to keep in mind!

The participants of the Rural Women's Gathering shared with one another vital stories and facts from their own countries and contexts. Among these were the following mind and heart-bending facts to consider as you do the exercises in this quiz.

On October 19, 1983 progressive president of Grenada Maurice Bishop was assassinated along with several cabinet ministers. Just six days later on October 25 Ronald Reagan ordered a US invasion of this tiny Caribbean nation, killing Cuban airport builders and Grenadian soldiers and civilians, following the initial 1,200 US troop force with a total of 7,000 to occupy the country and install a puppet government. The pretext? Saving US medical students and re-establishing "stability". This ended the first democratic attempt since the country's independence in 1974 to redistribute some of the wealth of the country for the benefit of the majority poor.

In Latin America policies emanating from the so-called "Washington Consensus" and implemented by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB)/ Inter American Development Bank (IDB) and under trade liberalization accords like the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and now the undemocratically-imposed Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and bilateral trade agreements signed in lieu of the successfully buried Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), have impoverished and marginalized millions of the workers of the region. Some 200 million men, women and children live below the poverty line, or 40% of the total population. There are 40 million street children across the hemisphere.

In Mexico, where there were more millionaires created than in the US since NAFTA was signed, some 600 persons leave the country each day as economic refugees. Since 1994 when NAFTA took effect 1.7 million people have been driven from their rural homes, and 25% of those remaining live in extreme poverty, on less than \$2 per day. In 2006 some \$25 billion in remittances were sent by immigrant Mexican workers abroad to their family members left behind, the largest source of foreign currency besides petroleum. In El Salvador a full 1/3 of the entire population have had to migrate in search of work to feed their families. The situation of Guatemalans is similarly tragic. Throughout the region dislocations from the dirty wars of the 1980s waged by the U.S. and proxy forces in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, and now in Colombia, and under deepening economic predations of the 90s on from Mexico on down south throughout the region, impoverishment has reached levels that have compelled millions to leave home in search of sustenance, and to organize massive social movements that have begun to topple governments that insist on continuing to implement the neo-liberal policies that created this painful situation.

With the new alliance between US-based agribusiness giants like Archer Daniels and Midland, Cargill and Monsanto together with car manufacturers and the energy corporations, and as a consequence of the diversion in the US of 50 million tons of subsidized corn into ethanol production to fuel our profligate fleet of SUVs, together with grain hoarding and speculation on the part of Cargill and others in Mexico, Malaysia and elsewhere, the prices for wheat, rice and corn have skyrocketed worldwide, causing unmanageable levels of hunger that have already toppled a Prime Minister in Haiti, and added another 100 million persons to the ranks of the malnourished in the world. Today 3 billion people live below the poverty line of \$2 per day or less.

This Social Justice Literacy Quiz is dedicated to the famished of this world and to the hope for a loving and abundant future for humanity as a whole.

From Herod to Homeland Security (ICE): January 6, Epiphany

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another road.

Mathew 2: 10-12

1) What are the primary functions of *empire*? (choose 3 of the following)

- a) to stop outlying countries from warring with each other
- b) to gain access to abundant natural resources
- c) to gain access to an abundant labor supply
- d) to concentrate wealth at the center
- e) to decentralize economic development

2) What characteristics do all empires exhibit? (choose all that apply)

- a) permanent military bases/occupations in dominated countries
- b) an inflated military budget
- c) widespread worker exploitation (slavery, indentured servitude, or union busting and human trafficking)
- d) ostentatious displays of wealth among the ruling class
- e) impoverishment in outlying areas
- f) forced migration from the periphery toward the center
- g) resistance on the part of the colonized

3. The Roman Legions were to ancient Rome what _____ is/are to corporate-led globalization today?

- a) the Peace Corps
- b) the merchant marine
- c) the U.S. military
- d) Hollywood

4. The “race to the bottom” in terms of wages and working conditions is to corporate-led globalization what _____ was/were for the Roman Empire.

- a) the minimum wage
- b) economic opportunity
- c) slavery
- d) chariot races
- e) unionization drives

Answers: 1: b,c,d; 2: all; 3: U.S. military; 4: c

January 26: Global Day of Action for Peace and Justice

“...the King of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get to your burdens” And Pharaoh said, “Behold, the people of the land are many and you make them rest from their burdens!” The same day Pharaoh commanded the task masters of the people and their foremen. “You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as heretofore; let them go and gather straw for themselves. But the number of bricks which they made heretofore you shall lay upon them, you shall by no means lessen it; for they are idle; therefore they cry, “let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.” Let heavier work be laid upon the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words.” Exodus 5: 4-9

Before proceeding with this exercise, cover the column of answers on the right with some paper. When you have finished compare your answers with the answers provided.

Group these by their affinities into these four categories:

1) Empire 2) Participatory Democracy 3) Monopoly control 4) Solidarity Economy (some may overlap) Write the relevant numbers besides each item.

Answers:

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. “All Roads Lead to Rome” | 1 |
| 2. “We dream of a world in which all worlds fit.” | 2 |
| 3. Privatization of the Goods of Nature | 3, 1 |
| 4. Popular universal education | 2 |
| 5. Alternative localized food economy | 4, 2 |
| 6. NAFTA, CAFTA, bilateral free trade agreements | 3 |
| 7. World Trade Organization (WTO) | 1, 3 |
| 8. United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples’ Rights | 2, 4 |
| 9. International Labor Organization, Article 169 | 2, 4 |
| 10. Food sovereignty | 2, 4 |
| 11. Fair trade coffee, tea and chocolate | 4 |
| 12. Local farmers markets | 4 |
| 13. Remittances home from immigrant workers | 1, 4 |
| 14. Patents on seeds and other living organisms | 3, 1 |
| 15. Landlessness | 1, 3 |
| 16. Unregulated transnational corporation-dominated markets | 3, 1 |
| 17. Agrofuels to meet demand for SUVs in the U.S. | 3, 1 |
| 18. Monocultures on large plantations: soybeans, African palm trees, etc.. | 3, 1 |
| 19. small-scale diverse agriculture, forestry and fishing | 4, 2 |
| 20. Migrant deaths at national borders or at sea | 1, 3 |
| 21. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) | 1 |
| 22. volatility in agricultural commodity prices | 3 |
| 23. increasing gap between rich and poor, urban and rural | 1, 3 |
| 24. mad cow disease | 1, 3 |
| 25. energy conservation | 4, 2 |

March 8: International Women's Day: The Diversity of God's Creation

Wisdom cries aloud in the street: in the markets **She** raises her voice, on top of the walls she cries out, at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: "How long, o simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Give heed to my reproof: behold, I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, and you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you, when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you, Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. Proverbs 1: 20-29

True/False (write T of F beside each sentence.)

1. On average at least twice as many total food calories per acre are produced on small family farms than on large expanses of industrialized monocultures.
2. A handful of fertile soil contains billions of soil microorganisms, thousands of species of bacteria (most unclassified), hundreds of species of fungi and protozoa, and dozens of species of nematodes, mites and microarthropods.
3. Low-input, small-scale agriculture is incapable of feeding humanity because of population growth and urbanization.
4. Food *security* (as opposed to *food sovereignty*) can be accomplished through food aid from countries producing surpluses, managed by large transnational corporations.
5. Food *sovereignty* (as opposed to food *security*) assures small farmers an equitable compensation for their diverse production for their community and control over local agricultural markets, reducing rural impoverishment and hunger.
6. One of the side effects of the industrialization of agriculture is the economic marginalization of women's agricultural and food processing work.
7. Women all over the world have the right to own and manage land.
8. It is likely that seed saving and agriculture itself were invented by rural women gatherers, midwives and gardeners.

Answers: 1: T; 2: T; 3: F (most food consumed in the world comes from the diminishing ranks of small-scale farmers); 4: T; 5: T; 6: T; 7: F; 8: T.

May Day 1886... 2008 International Worker and Immigrant Rights Day!

“You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath will burn...” Exodus 22: 21-22

Fill in the blanks:

- 1. One sign of the extent of forced migration from Mexico and Guatemala to the U.S. is the experience that many thoroughbred horses in Kentucky respond exclusively to the _____ language, and not to English..*
- 2. Of the 450-500 immigrants who died crossing the Mexico US border each of the past 15 years, approximately _____ were women and children.*
- 3. The main little-reported cause of the tortilla crisis and tortilla riots in Mexico in 2006 was not price hikes caused by the production of ethanol from corn in the U.S., but rather the behavior of _____ Corporation who hoarded and speculated with their stores of corn in their port facilities and warehouse commodity stores across Mexico.*
- 4. Corn varieties across Mexico have been found to be contaminated by DNA from _____-modified corn imported from the U.S. under the NAFTA agreement.*
- 5. Across the world it is estimated that there are 300 _____ immigrants on the move each year.*
- 6. The marches on May 1, 2006 by immigrant workers and their supporters were historical in that they were the _____ mobilizations of people on the streets of the U.S. in the history of this country.*
- 7. Undocumented immigrants (men aged 18-36) are only _____ as likely to be incarcerated for criminal activity than ordinary U.S. citizens.*
- 8. The U.S. Social Security Administration in 2002 showed there were \$463 billion in funds that did not _____ to any documented US residents or U.S. citizens, money the undocumented person will never enjoy any benefit from.*
- 9. In the last decade most of the undocumented immigrants moving into the U.S. have come from southern _____, and many of them speak _____ languages and only speak Spanish as a second language.*

Answers: 1: Spanish; 2: 80-100; 3: Cargill; 4: genetically; 5: million; 6: largest; 7: 1/5th; 8: correspond; 9: Mexico, indigenous

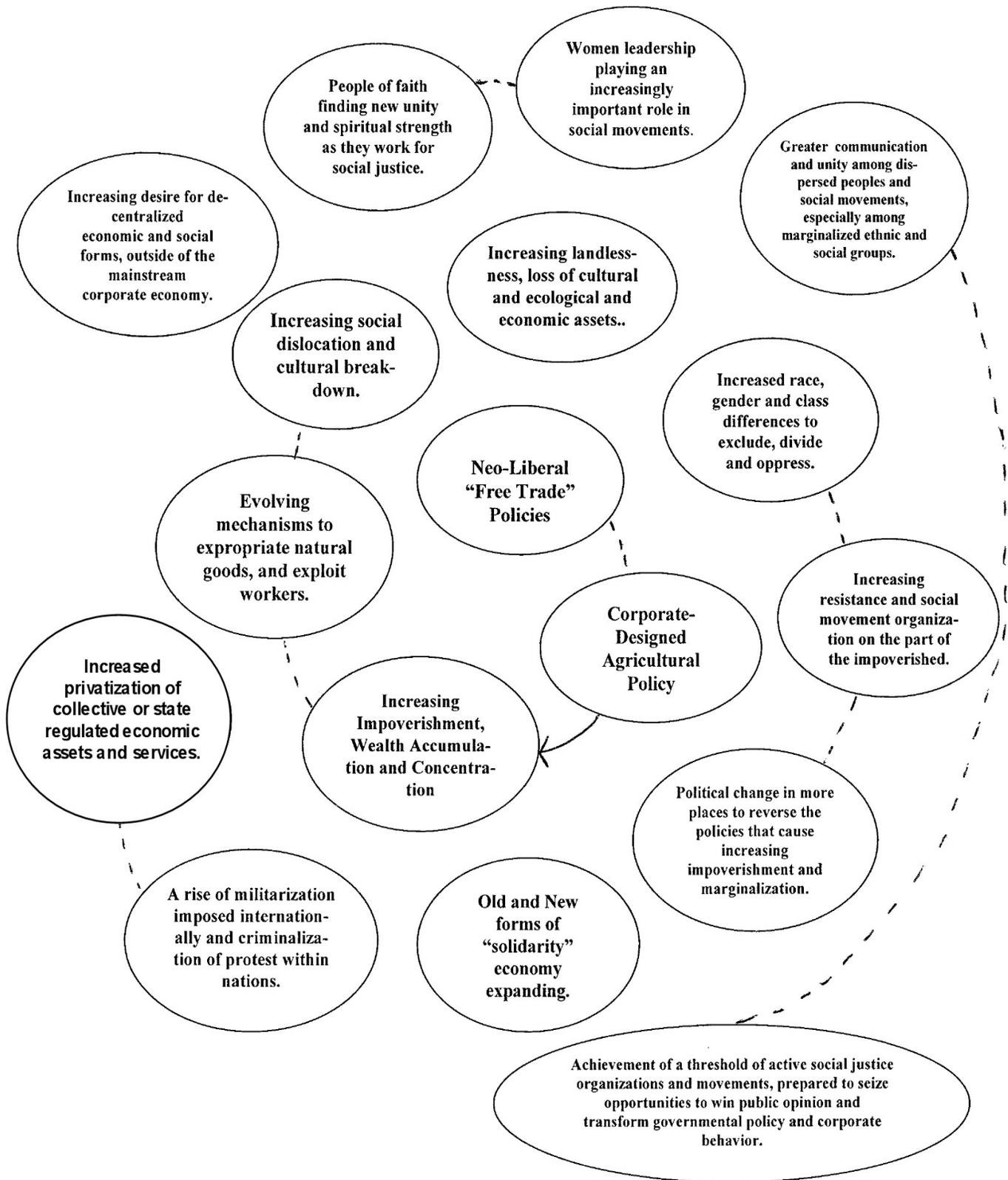
October 12: *International Day of Indigenous Resistance to Conquest* (no longer *Columbus Day* in many countries of the Americas)

Accra Confession, from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC): 20. 21

“We believe that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Gen 9.8-12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the market place (Is 55: 1). It is an economy of grace for the household of all of creation. Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners and calls us to put justice for the “least of these” (Mt 25: 40) at the center of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hos 2: 18ff). Therefore we reject the culture of rampant consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the neoliberal global market system or any other system which claims there is no alternative.”

Discussion question: If indigenous cosmovision is best characterized by an awareness of the essential unity and radical egalitarianism between all living things (ie as part of an ecological community), as exemplified by the use of indigenous languages where “people” tends to mean “all living creatures and plants,” then what parallels exist between indigenous cosmovision and the vision of a “covenant with all of creation” from Genesis as expressed in this portion of the Accra Confession?





Connect the dots: Draw arrows between things that are causal to other things...and double arrows between mutually reinforcing concepts.



December 24: Christian's Celebration of the Birth of a Grassroots and Cosmically connected Prophet of the People and of God

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place; and to them he said, “you go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.” So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, “Why do you stand here idle all day?” They said to him, “ Because no one has hired us. He said to them, “You go into the vineyard too.” And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, “Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first. And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. And when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, saying, “These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.” But he replied to one of them, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?” So the last will be first, and the first last.” Mathew 20: 1-16

Discussion questions:

1. How does capitalism as it exists today differ from or support this generous vision of the kingdom of God?
2. Do some middle class or wealthy individuals in today's society complain about welfare or other social services provided to the poor by the government? What has been the trend in terms of government providing those services and that safety net?
3. Do the values of Christianity correspond with the profit motive of capitalism, and the accumulation of wealth? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
4. What are Christians called to do in a world polarized and degraded by the ills of our economic systems, and by warfare?
5. How can North American Christians support the growing social movements across the planet of those impacted most by the negative impacts of corporate-led globalization?
6. How does the indigenous peoples' ethic that our actions should be guided by an awareness of their impact on the seven generations yet unborn guide us in how we choose our priorities?

Glossary:

capitalism: an economic system based on the private accumulation of 'capital' or 'means of production' (land, machinery, patented ideas or technology) that when combined with wage labor produces added value or wealth

campesino: a Spanish language word that refers to people of the land (campo) or 'peasants' but could be better translated as "family farmer." Pejoratively used in some regions or situations, but an identity proudly embraced in others

cosmovision: an overarching worldview or cosmological-spiritual orientation, usually associated with indigenous peoples ways of understanding reality

egalitarianism: a system that places a high value on equity in wealth and status in society

empire: a system of geopolitical control and economic domination and exploitation by one group or nation over outlying countries or regions, typically enforced through military conquest and/or occupations and economic structures that concentrate wealth in the center, flowing in from the peripheries

expropriation: the taking of assets by a private or public entity, or with public enforcement

food security: freedom from outright hunger, by any means, whether food aid distribution or local or regional production and storage

food sovereignty: local, regional or national democratic control over the food economy, on what food is produced and how it is produced, traded and compensated, a concept that includes food security

free trade: a characterization of liberalized trade whose goal is the elimination of market regulation or protection, "free" trade agreements also typically come with clauses favoring investors over states in litigation, as a means of protecting investments from governmental restrictions, such as labor or environmental standards

marginalization: the systematic exclusion or economic or social disadvantaging of a group (which could be a minority or a majority) within society

neo-liberal: corporate-led deregulation of economic relations and activity, opening or 'liberalizing' of trade across the planet

privatization: the transferring of previously commonly or publically held goods or resources to private ownership, typically corporate ownership, ranging from patented DNA and seeds to public water systems and power plants

socialism: an economic system that relies on the social regulation of markets, means of production, distribution of wealth with the goal of maintaining economic justice

solidarity economy: economic relations and markets based on a social agreement that prioritizes social and economic justice criteria over purely market price considerations

undocumented immigrant: this term has been chosen to substitute the commonly used epithets "illegal" or "alien" immigrant, simply refers to an immigrant who does not have the necessary documentation to be considered 'legal'

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The Omnivore's Dilemma, Michael Pollan
The Open Veins of Latin America, Eduardo Galeano
Food is Different, Peter Rosset



Contact Us!

Resource/ Invitation: **Agricultural Missions, Inc.(AMI)** accompanies rural peoples' movements and organizations throughout the world, including within the U.S. AMI invites church congregations and faith communities to join us in ***God's Increase Seed Initiative***, a grassroots program of education for advocacy and action to support the rebuilding of local food economies that are inclusive, ecological and economically just.

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