

# The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r

An independent weekly internet magazine  
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,  
social justice and peace - Providing commentary,  
analysis and investigations on issues affecting  
African Americans and the African world.

[www.BlackCommentator.com](http://www.BlackCommentator.com)

**January 29, 2009 - Issue 309**

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

[Click Here](#)

[Home](#)

## **Why They Might Not Like Us Solidarity America By John Funciello BlackCommentator.com Columnist**

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

Why do people around the world say they like Americans, but say they just don't like the government?

It's fair to say that U.S. government policy is set largely by what is good for business, and globally, American policy is set by what's good for (transnational) corporations that may be headquartered in the U.S., but which have enterprises in other countries, often in many countries.

As these corporations go forth into the world, they have the might of America behind them - the might of the largest economy, one of the largest contiguous and (formerly) productive land masses, and the largest military. Altogether, other countries are faced with a very powerful force in the world economy.

To assist American - and other - corporations in their global trade over the past several decades, there have been institutions set up to assist them in their commerce. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization are three of the better known. Over the years, they have been in the business of telling other countries how to restructure their economies to succeed in the world.

To succeed, poor countries were told, they needed to change so they looked more like a western economy, like the U.S. economy. In country after country, the people - their society, culture, and economy - were not ready to make such a leap, could not make the necessary changes.

What they did get out of all the advice and loans and grants and "assistance" is the disruption of their way of life, forced migration of rural peoples, and urbanization of their populations, to the point at which there were thousands or millions living literally on the edges of their cities, without a means to subsist, let alone access to work that paid enough to live decently.

The poor have suffered long and often, when the effects of the global economy have been visited upon them. One of the results of the economic "restructuring" in so many countries has been the creation of a pool of workers who will accept wages so low that it's indentured servitude or worse, slavery. That's where the transnational corporations put their factories and shops. The people who work in them have no place to go, so they work for the lowest of low wages.

Countries have been encouraged to eliminate traditional farming in favor of cash crops to pay off the national loans. They have been told to privatize everything, including water, so a profit can be made on the "services" thus privatized.

Because the economic meltdown will affect most countries in the world, the risk of hunger, starvation, and widespread famine is great. The people of less developed countries are concerned that they won't be able to produce enough food and there certainly won't be enough money to buy it and get it to those who need it.

Small farmers produce about 80 percent of the world's food, despite what we're told by the U.S. government and American agribusinesses. And, the majority of that 80 percent is planted, tended, and harvested by women. This system of small-farm agriculture is vital to the subsistence of huge regions of the world and it is threatened by the continued "restructuring" of their economies.

Mostly, their agricultural practices are of long standing - hundreds, if not thousands of years - and they have allowed peoples' survival over the millennia. All of that is threatened by "modernizing" their agriculture, which means that they will be required to buy their seeds from (usually) transnational corporations, they will need chemical fertilizers, and they probably will need quantities of chemical pesticides and herbicides, and lots of fuel (petroleum). None of these can they afford.

In India, there are many who are called "debt farmers," which means that, over generations, they live in debt with little hope of ever planting a crop free of debt and the poverty that goes with it.

A number of years ago, Monsanto, the giant St. Louis-based chemical company which has bought out so many regional and family-owned U.S. seed companies in recent years, demanded that the Indian government stop farmers from saving their patented seeds from one season to another. The farmers demonstrated against such an unnatural order, the Indian army was called out, and the demonstration was put down as a riot. Those who suffered, of course, were the farmers.

The patenting of seeds goes hand-in-hand with the "restructuring" of economies of developing nations. Profits go to the transnationals and a handful of the local people who run their subsidiaries in those countries. Farmers are required to buy new seeds from the corporation every year.

It's an old story by now, and there are organizations of farmers and their supporters in virtually every country trying to stop the steamroller of corporate control.

This week, there is a meeting in Madrid, Spain, on food security and those who have the most prominent place are organizations and corporations like Monsanto, which are the very cause of food insecurity.

According to GRAIN, an international non-governmental organization, "The policies of these various institutions and transnational companies have completely failed; it is time to implement the alternative, food sovereignty." GRAIN promotes the sustainable management and use of agricultural biodiversity, based on people's control over genetic resources and local knowledge.

The group stated this week, "This model is based on the right to food and to the rights of peoples to define their own agricultural policies. The food crisis should not be an opportunity to make more money through the sale of fertilizers, agrochemicals and genetically modified seeds. Agribusinesses cannot be allowed to attempt to profit from the desperation of over a billion people. They must be excluded from dealing with the food crisis - agribusiness and international financial and trade agencies

cannot be relied upon to solve a problem they themselves have caused.”

There is a full declaration on the subject, released at the Madrid meeting and signed by 49 organizations. Peasant and indigenous organizations from around the world are very aware of the threat to their traditional way of life - a way of life that will become more important to their survival as economies worsen - and they are educating and organizing themselves to gain food sovereignty for themselves and their countries.

The idea of food sovereignty will become more familiar as the problems of feeding ourselves increase and even farmers in the developed world - the U.S. in particular - may begin to understand their place in the order of things and realize that they have more in common with small farmers in poor countries, than with Monsanto, ConAgra, Archer Daniels Midland and the rest.


Food sovereignty, in part, means a system of agriculture based on small, traditional and sustainable methods, with the people in charge of those methods and the markets, in short, an agriculture based on the common good, rather than corporate profits.


[Click here to comment on any article  
in this issue or see what others are saying in the](#)  
**The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog**

**BlackCommentator.com** Columnist, John Funciello, is a labor organizer and former union organizer. His union work started when he became a local president of The Newspaper Guild in the early 1970s. He was a reporter for 14 years for newspapers in New York State. In addition to labor work, he is organizing family farmers as they struggle to stay on the land under enormous pressure from factory food producers and land developers. Click [here](#) to contact Mr. Funciello.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)  
Click Here

[Home](#)

Click Here To  
CONTRIBUTE TO  NOW

Click Here To  
CONTACT 

Your comments are always welcome.

### **e-Mail re-print notice**

If you send us an e-Mail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by





Copyright © 2002-2009  
www.BlackCommentator.com  
All Rights Reserved