

Rising Sun

Women
Proutists of
North
America

July 2016

US Prisons, Women and the Progressive Utilization Theory

By Nada Khader, Women Proutists of North America
Board Member

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Women and Their Rights



WESPAC members with students writing letters to prisoners.

The founder of Prout, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, once told us that we can only punish a person as much as we love that person, and that punishment must always be corrective by nature. Sadly, our prison system in the United States today is far from a paragon of healing and nurturing that could truly help transform people who have committed serious crimes into productive members of our society. Women, especially, are at risk of being abused and assaulted while incarcerated; the current prison environment is degrading for both prisoners and corrections officers who work in prisons, thereby creating an ambiance that is conducive for abuse and corruption. As Proutists, we envision correctional insti-

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Purchasing Capacity: A Key Prout Economic Concept

By John Gross

Policy makers and the public both deserve meaningful measures of economic well being. Appropriate economic indicators of this type provide a snap shot of overall well being and indicate how economic conditions are changing, or how they may differ regionally.

PROUT discourages the use of per capita Gross National Product (GNP) or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and similar measures for this purpose. Such measures never give a true picture of a population's economic condition, but when there is pronounced inequality in distribution of income and wealth, such measures, can be extremely misleading. Median measures, which are not skewed by outliers as are mean scores (averages) are better but still fail to give a true picture of economic well being.

Rather than these, PROUT advocates the use of Purchasing Capacity, a measure of the ability to obtain the minimum necessities of life (food, clothing, housing, medical care and education). In a future segment we consider specific Purchasing Capacity metrics and some specifics regarding how they might be computed and used. Here we look a bit at some of the concerns with the use of per capita and median income measures.

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Cooperative Leadership

A regular column by Satya Tanner

The Insights of Leading Volunteers and Peers

Leading peers and volunteers can be daunting for many people because it's a much tougher 'audience'. However, if you turn it around and apply the insights of managing volunteers and peers to your regular role, you may find you get even better results.

For most people, leadership involves a vision, a group of people and a means to move toward that vision. And for most people in a leadership role, that means of moving toward the vision is based on some kind of authority, persuasion and managerial skill. For example, if I want to change my organizational structure so that we can become better organized, the means of moving toward that new structure requires some authority to decide on the new structure, influencing others around you to go through the change, and the managerial skills to orchestrate the change.

For a business context, authority is usually clear and this may go a long way in helping you to influence oth-

ers, i. e., the boss can call the shots. However, leading volunteers or a peer group presents a slightly different set of challenges.

My first two leadership roles were managing a group of my peers though significant organizational development changes, and managing a volunteer team of competitive athletes through the development of new, highly political, race rules for the sport. In theory I had 'authority', but in reality it could easily be undermined.

In my experience, peers are less tolerant of direct leadership styles (unless they can see that the situation absolutely demands it), and volunteers will stick with you so long as they are happy and motivated. If the 'vibe' doesn't suit them any more, they can be right out the door.

This then leads to the issue of persuasion. In a position with clearer authority, it's much easier to ask someone to do an undesirable task because usually they are getting paid to do that. But when it's volunteers, there is something else at stake. If you don't tread carefully, you'll be the only one left! And if it's peers, if you don't

What is Prout?

PROUT is an acronym for the Progressive Utilization Theory which was propounded in 1959 by Indian philosopher Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. PROUT presents a viable alternative to the outmoded capitalist and communist socio-economic models. Neither of these theories has adequately met the needs of humanity.

Proutists are seeking to convey the comprehensive and visionary goals of PROUT theory, which combines the wisdom of spirituality, the struggle for self reliance and the spirit of economic democracy. As women who are Proutists, in this magazine, we are attempting to focus on the particular struggles that women face in attaining self reliance in society. However, we also wish to present the complete vision of Prout as a new ideology for a new world.

Toward the goal of being inclusive, we invite Proutists and others who are interested in providing a platform for social change to submit articles, letters to the editor, poetry, blogs, and other writings to Rising Sun. We want to take the pulse of the 99 percent and to try to reflect in some small way the voice of the people.

Key Principles of PROUT and Neo-Humanism:

Neo-humanism expands the humanistic love for all human beings to include love and respect for all creation - plants, animals and even inanimate objects.

Neo-humanism provides a theoretical base for creating a new era of ecological balance and planetary kinship.

Basic necessities guaranteed to all: In order to be able to actualize their highest aspirations, people need to have their basic needs met. Access to food, shelter, clothing, education and medical are fundamental human rights which must be guaranteed to all.

Balanced economy: Prout advocates regional self-reliance, cooperatively owned and managed businesses, local control of large scale key industries, and limits on the individual accumulation of wealth.

Women's Rights: Prout encourages the struggle against all forms of violence and exploitation used to suppress women. Prout's goal is coordinated cooperation, with equal rights between men and women.

Cultural Diversity: In the spirit of universal fellowship, Prout encourages the protection and cultivation of local culture, language, history and tradition.

World Government: Prout supports the creation of world government with a global constitution and common penal code.

tread carefully, you won't have any friends left. Therefore, the situation offers an excellent opportunity to fine tune your persuasion skills.

Research suggests that personal power bases (expert power and referent power) are more effective than formal power bases (coercive power, reward power, and legitimate power) (1). Therefore this means that being seen as an admirable person, using rational persuasion and/or being an expert in your field is what will help you to influence others.

When I was in charge of a team of athletes, I was far from an expert in the field, therefore I had to rely on either rational persuasion, or referent power by gaining their trust for what I stood for as a person. I decided to take a highly consultative approach as we contributed to the development of new race rules for the sport. I involved everybody in the decisions and acted like a facilitator rather than a decision maker. This very quickly built trust. But also, it soon became apparent that not everybody cared about every decision. Therefore I gave people the option to 'opt in' and then determined whether they just wanted to be informed along the way, or an active part of the discussion. In many ways, not being an expert was my strength because it meant I relied on the others to help guide the decision making. This resulted in the trust that I wouldn't 'shoot from the hip' with my decision making. Rather they knew that I would come to the experts and get advice.

Similarly, when I led a group of peers through organizational development changes, I had slightly more expert power due to my tenure in the role. Because the nature of what we were doing was a highly logical exercise, I relied heavily on rational persuasion to help guide the development of processes, knowledge handbooks and training programs within our team. That I didn't need to rely on any of my formal power bases kept the friendships running smoothly.

Upon reflection, these early leadership experiences were significant in forming my leadership style today. Whilst I have the ability to employ more directive tactics where required, I often find myself in charge of a group of experts and naturally find myself using personal power bases to lead those teams with good effect.

There are no uncomfortable inferior/superior power dynamics because I genuinely appreciate my staff and they genuinely appreciate me. It's an honest exchange based on rationality and trust, just like my days of managing volunteers and peers.

Reference:

1 - 2011, Robbins, Judge, Millet, Boyle, Organisational Behaviour p370, Pearson Australia

Satya Tanner had a 16-year career as a pilot and aerospace engineer in the Royal Australian Air Force, leading people and managing projects. She has studied Prout at a post graduate level and has a passion for helping organizations and communities that are in search of innovation, leadership, healthy cultures and conscious business principles.



Rising Sun

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Mission Statement

Women PROUTists are working together to create a world in which all people have the opportunity to develop their full potential.

We educate and organize our communities to resist oppression, exploitation and discrimination. Women PROUTists support the all-round physical, economic, intellectual and spiritual development of women.

Women Proutist Profile

Mirra Price

Women Proutist Board Member

Years before I was introduced to the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout), I dropped out of college to protest the Viet Nam War and my college (Indiana University)'s investments in the war machine. Tear gassed at the 1969 Second Moratorium to End the War in Washington, D.C., and thrown in jail briefly, I was a serious anti-war organizer. I put out an underground newspaper, did Indianapolis Draft Project counseling, and performed in guerrilla theatre.



It was the summer of love, and we were all so idealistic, yet we sobered up fast, after the beating and jailing of protesters at the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention, and then in 1970 we were shocked at the massacre of four Kent State stu-

dents by the Ohio National Guard and the two African-American students killed at Jackson State in Mississippi. This was the era when television was king, giving us a window into the horrors of the war, as we watched the evening news with Walter Cronkite. It shook us and the world awake.

Yet once the war was over, the massive anti-war protest movement collapsed. Additionally, many women from the anti-war movement had grown disenchanted with the oppressive male leadership, prompting us to form the Women's Liberation Movement. Some people went back to the land, growing our own food, creating our own communes and collectives. I was part of a work collective at a Prout Food Cooperative in Bloomington, Indiana in 1974, which convinced me that the decentralized economic policy of Prout was workable and important to promote.

As a GP (Women Proutist) LFT (Local Full-time worker) in Kansas City, Missouri in the 80s, I helped publish a daily newspaper, The Prout Star, taught Prout classes, and distributed food to the poor.

In the 70s and 80s, I stood beside Alice Benally, the 90-year-old grandmother of two of my Navajo (Dineh) high

school students, as she and a Zen monk lay down on the road to keep a bulldozer from tearing down one of the fences on her land.

I saw Alice and other Dineh women elders, get up before dawn, chop wood for their breakfast fires, and then prepare meals for their extended families in their small, traditional eight-sided hogans.

These courageous elders formed a group of Big Mountain Resisters to Forced Relocation. We organized a caravan from Denver, Colorado with food, tools and cash to assist them in their struggle to survive and to stay on their lands. My English classes recorded traditional Dineh stories and songs as part of an oral history project. To me this is samaja (local economic self-sufficient groups) organizing at its best. The cultural survival of the Dineh was and still is, at stake.

Fast forwarding a few decades finds me editing the Women Proutist Rising Sun magazine since 2010, helping organize the Economic Democracy Conference in Madison, Wisconsin in 2012, and recently I was part of the organizing team of the Prout Strategic Planning Seminar in Asheville. I have also coordinated Prout Study Groups.

Where do we go from here? Just as when I worked for the Women's Liberation Movement in the 60s and 70s, I am passionate about the equality of women within the Prout movement as well as in the larger society.

Neither Prout nor society can fly on only one wing. As a Woman Proutist, I seek to help create a world in which women and other marginalized groups can become more important stakeholders and have better access to equal pay, child care, paid family leave, proper education, health care and a seat beside, not behind men. I call on men, too, to invite women to take our rightful place in coordinated, rather than subordinated cooperation. Only then can we all work together to create the world we want to see.

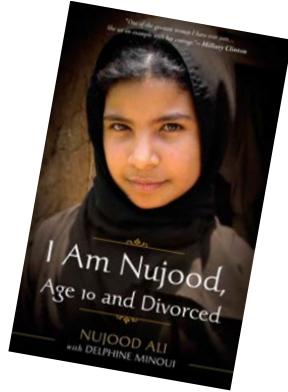
Mirra Price, M.Ed., (Northern Arizona University) Ed. M. (Harvard) a retired English teacher is currently a writer, editor, copyeditor and activist. She has worked in several cooperatives, promoted many social justice causes, and has advocated for women's rights and gender equality since the 1960s. For several decades, she has given workshops and classes on social justice issues and neo-humanist education. www.proutwomen.org Email: womenproutists@gmail.com.

Book Review

by Diane Alcantara

I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced

Author: Nujood Ali



“One of the greatest women I have ever seen...she set an example with her courage.” Hillary Clinton

How did you spend your childhood? Going to school, reading, playing with friends, going to camp, travelling, family outings? Not the case for Nujood, a little girl from a small village in Yemen who was forced into marriage at the age of ten, to a man three times her age.

Nujood was physically and emotionally abused by her husband and mother-in-law. She felt abandoned by her family since even her mother provided no support. She turned to her father's second wife for guidance. After hearing Nujood's story, the woman directed Nujood to go to the courts to plead her case, asking for a divorce. Imagine – 10 years old!

Nujood had to run away in order to make this happen. She knew nothing about the city or location of the courthouse. As good fortune would have it, she reaches her destination. There she meets several people who are sympathetic to her cause, including a female lawyer, Sada, who upon hearing Nujood's horror story, accepts the case and vows to heal the wounded child.

Nujood set a precedent for young girls living in countries where marriage at a very young age is commonplace. After her divorce was granted, Nujood became something of an international figure. She was allowed the freedom to go back to school. Her desire is to become a lawyer so she can help girls who find themselves in similar circumstances.

This book reveals what life is like for thousands of young girls who live in repressive conditions. Many countries, in addition to Yemen, follow similar patterns with regards to marriage – with fathers contracting their young daughters, selling them to men 2, 3 even 5 times older than the girls.

Nujood's story is one of bravery. She displays wisdom and maturity well beyond her age. Hers is a remarkable story and an eye-opener.

Recipe Corner

A regular column
by Liina Laufer



Gallo Pinto is a traditional breakfast food in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, made with rice and beans, often left over from the night before. I enjoyed it travelling around Costa Rica, and found that this protein rich meal prepared me for a day of adventuring.

My partner Israel has modified the recipe to skip the onions and includes more vegetables. In addition to pepper and corn, you could include chopped celery, carrots, or shredded cabbage. We have even included asparagus!

Ingredients:

- 2 cups white rice; cooked
- 1 cup cooked black beans
- ¼ cup red bell pepper
- ¼ cup corn
- 1 tsp chili pepper
- 1 tsp cumin
- Pinch of cayenne
- 2 T Lizano Salsa
- 3 tsp oil
- Salt
- 2 T chopped cilantro



Instructions:

Heat oil in a frying pan on medium heat for a minute and add chopped vegetables, corn, and beans. Cook while stirring occasionally for 8-10 minutes. Add rice and cook for 3-5 more minutes. Drizzle with Lizano Salsa if available, add spices, and salt to taste. Just before serving, top with the cilantro.

Serve solo, or top with avocado, queso fresco, and sliced tomatoes.

Check out Liina's blog at recipessdeliina.wordpress.com



Mirra Price, Ruth Li and Didi Ananda Candrasekhara at 880 The Revolution Radio Station.

Celebrating Natalie: Reflections on Natalie Goldberg's Inspiration to Write Our Stories

By Jyoti Wind

In mid-February, 2016, a few of us drove to Taos, NM for the 30th year celebration of Natalie Goldberg's book *Writing Down the Bones*. The city was naming Feb. 19th "Natalie Goldberg Day" to commemorate her contribution to the area, in bringing writers and students there for seminars, documenting places in Taos where she would write (cafes, laundromats, restaurants), and adding to the view of Taos as a creative center.

The next morning, people gathered to tell their stories of Nat's life, their personal experiences with her. She was gracious in a Zen way, and then led us through a fundraiser afternoon of writing and sharing. One piece of advice she offered: 'Keep the hand moving. It is a chance to separate the critic from creative mind.'

Natalie had been an at-a-distance mentor for me over the years, leading me to form women's writing groups, using her book to re-inforce principles such as: 'Write where you are', 'write what wants to be written,' and to allow our trust in the process to guide us. She sent us off with the exhortation: 'Don't waste your life!'

Last night, two months later, Natalie Goldberg came to Boulder for a public interview at the library theater. She said: 'Put pen to paper. In doing so, you face everything.' Her words rang true. She continued: 'The practice of writing becomes the relationship of you with your own mind, and everything else, trees, etc.'

From her new book, *The Great Spring: Writing, Zen and This Zigzag Life*, she suggests, 'Through writing I grew strong-minded, not stubborn. I stood close witness to our aching, inspired living. The act of pen on paper, or two hands on keyboard, rendered a practice of confidence, a training in waking up.'

And she asks us to wake up to ourselves, to our lives, and to writing as a spiritual practice.

Jyoti Wind is a poet and author. Her poetry has recently been published at elephant journal online and she has self-published several books of poetry and prose, a childhood memoir, and three anthologies. In her day job as an astrologer, she counsels her clients on spiritual as well as mundane affairs. She can be reached at 303.541-9106 or wind.jyoti@gmail.com

Women Proutists' Radio Interview with Jeff Messer

By Mirra Price

As part of the publicity for the Prout Seminar held in Asheville, North Carolina May 6th-8th, there were two radio interviews set up with Jeff Messer of 880 The Revolution Radio Station. The first of these interviews on Thursday, May 5th was with Didi Ananda Candrasekhara, Ruth Li, and Mirra Price.

We discussed issues affecting women today, potential solutions to problems faced by women through the implementation of Prout, and elevating women through spiritual practice and education.

The interview on Friday, May 9th was with Dada Vedaprajnananda and Ramesh Bjonnes, who discussed what will happen with US politics after Bernie Sanders and green economics.



Womansong Sings for Orlando

Womansong Chorus of Asheville, North Carolina, made a video to show support for the victims of the tragic shooting at the Pulse gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida on June 12, 2016, in which a gunman killed 49 people and injured 53 others. It was both the deadliest mass shooting by a single gunman and the deadliest incident of anti-LGBT violence in U.S. history. Pulse was hosting a Latin Night and most of the victims were of Hispanic descent. The assailant was Omar Mateen, a 29-year-old American, who was killed by Orlando police after a three-hour standoff.

You can find their video at:

<https://youtu.be/xRP36KTRSSo>

Global Prout Convention

From July 18-24 in Vig, Denmark at Ananda Gaori Master Unit, the seventh annual Prout Convention will be held. This year's convention is focused on the refugee crisis in Europe.

Didi Ananda Uttama, will give a presentation on her work with Syrian refugees. Prof. Sohail Inayatullah will introduce his Causal Layered Analysis theory for use in many current global concerns. Proutist Ramesh Bjonnes will share his new book hot off the press. For information and to register, go to: <http://www.proutconvention.dk/>

The next event, formerly known as "Activist Training", is a very dynamic strategic planning workshop for anyone interested in Prout work. This runs from June 24th to 28th. For more information: <http://www.proutconvention.dk/activism>

Venturing Out

by Jyoti Wind

The night was clear, my conscience the same.
I realized I wasn't to be a workhorse
for other people's wants.

Ebullient with happiness and light,
ready for my own life, I left the triangle
of giving myself away, other people's desires,
and fear, I let myself have my own life.

I learned to paint and received the artist inside.

I write and read my words to others.

I meditated and shared my visions.

I made myself a channel for my own growth,
for others if they chose, but enjoyed
every minute of it all.

I no longer dined at self-limitation's table.

I chose my friends from kindness, generosity
and gratitude's nest.

How could I go wrong.

The Goddess who stuffed Herself into a Sack

by Greg Firmstone

Let me tell you the story of the Goddess
who stuffed herself into a sack.

You've heard this tale before
It's woven in your genes
The desert wind like your Mother at dawn
kisses your forehead with Her whispering call:

"Wake up, Sweet Soul, it's time
you remembered Who You Are.

"Hop out of bed and dress
yourself once more in those
jewel-encrusted robes you thought
you had lost so long ago.

"Pick up again your crown of swirling galaxies
and place the rings of Saturn on the
fingers of Your left hand

"Because the Goddess likes to sit on the Left...

... You remember that now, don't you?"

Where was I?
Oh yes. The sack at
the beginning of Time.

You were sad and all alone back then.

All Love, with no one to Love
All Giving, with no one to give to
And everything You Created You wove
out of Your own Mindstuff.

For You were the only raw material
You could ever find to build and
fill Your Universe.
The Spider spins her web
from her own Body...

Thus it is with You.

And like the Spider Goddess that
You are, You sat at Your Loom and
set it to spinning for all Time.

And You spun
And You spun
And You spun the golden threads of
Your own DNA into the
sack-like bodies of Your Children.

Then You stuffed Yourself,
Your very Essence,
into each and
every one of us,

Tied us at the neck with a silken cord and
gently sang our Life's Mission into the very
core of our Being:

"Split the sack of this culture and stick your head
out!"*

Rumi and Hafiz paint it better than I:

'If I were in the Tavern tonight,
Hafiz would call for drinks.

And as the Master poured
I would be reminded that all I know
of myself and Life is that

We are just a midair flight of Golden Wine
between His Pitcher and His Cup."

We are poured out of God and as
drunkards we are Drunk and poured
back into God once more.

And now our bravest scientists boldly proclaim:

"The stuff of this universe is Mind Stuff."**

And though they're getting very, very warm
they still don't Know what the Holy Ones Know...

... that the stuff of this universe is God Herself.

Greg Firmstone, 1st September 2012

* Rumi

**Sir John Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington, circa 1930s.

Purchasing Capacity: A Key Prout Economic Concept

Continued from front cover

First, let's be clear on terminology. A per capita measure is simply an average. It is the total divided by the population (or number of households if that's our focus). So, per capita GDP is simply total GDP divided by Population.

The median is simply the middle point. The median is defined as the value where half the values are larger and half are smaller. If a distribution is symmetric the median and average are the same. When it is skewed (as is typical of distributions of income and wealth) median and per capita (average) measures can be quite different.

For example, when finding the average (mean, per capita) income of the following 5 incomes: \$1,000,000, \$50,000, \$25,000, \$15,000 and \$5,000, the mean or per capita income is \$219,000 while the median (middle value) is \$25,000. If we want a picture of how most people are doing the median value comes closer. The \$1,000,000 excessively influences the average so that it becomes meaningless as a measure of the midpoint of these incomes. The median comes closer, however, if we rely on the median measure of \$25,000, the circumstances of the family struggling to live on \$5,000 aren't caught. Any measure that only captures the center of a distribution tells us little about either extreme. When a distribution is highly skewed, averages (means/ per capita measures) will fall far from the middle, though when we hear "average" or even "per capita" we inherently think of the midpoint.

Below we show distributions of US household income for 2010 (green) and 2014 (purple). As we can see, these distributions are skewed (to the right) so we know that per capita and median house-hold incomes will be different. Median income in 2010 is just below \$50,000 and in 2014 is slightly above. Per capita household income is much higher, about \$69,000 in 2010 and over \$75,000

in 2014. Per capita is considerably higher than median because there are a few households in the relatively small group over \$250,000 annually that have extremely high incomes – even a few that exceed a billion dollars each year. These extremely high earning households push up the average for the entire US.

Both a median income of around \$50,000 and an average income of \$70,000 suggest that US families are doing quite well. A closer look at the distribution of household income gives a different story.

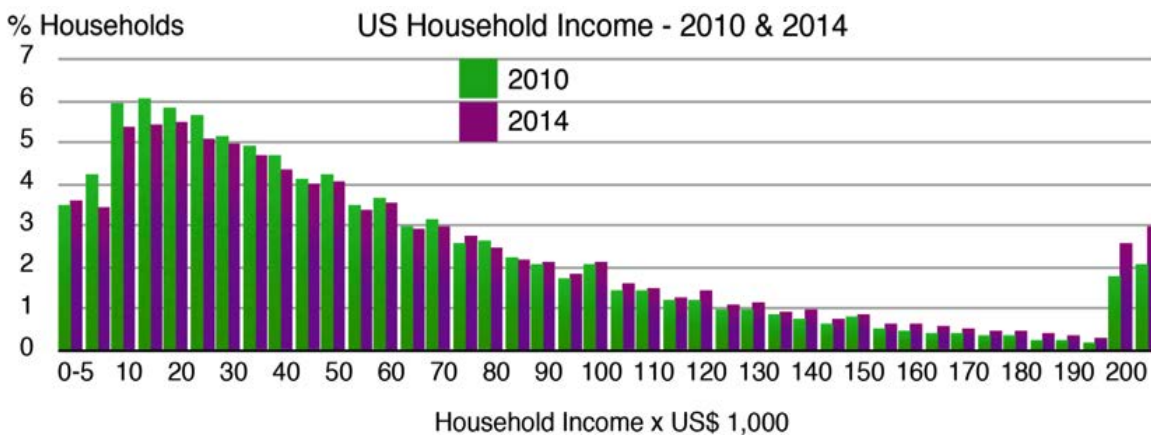
Over 20% of households have annual incomes of \$20,000 or less. An annual income for a household of four below \$24,250 is considered poverty level. The poverty level for a single individual is \$11,770. The percentage of households below this level, almost 10%, is about the same as all households above \$130,000.

Based on these statistics, over one in five of US families live in poverty and at least 10% live in severe poverty. This is sufficiently alarming for one of the wealthiest economies on the planet, but the reality is worse. Many of the lowest income households, those below \$12,000 per year, are not individuals but a single parent (almost always a mother) with children. Even a family of four with an income around \$25,000 per year, nominally just above the poverty line, in an urban area will, in actuality, live very poorly due to higher costs in such areas.

Most families with children with annual incomes below \$30,000 are a single medical crisis or even simply a costly car repair away from a severe turn for the worse. Neither per capita nor median income measures can possibly reveal even the existence of poverty, let alone its nature or extent. Thus PROUT advocates the use of Purchasing Capacity, a measure of the ability to purchase life's minimum necessities to capture how society and its members are faring.

Next time: Purchasing Capacity in detail.

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/in-cpovhlth/2014/dtables.html>



Jagatbandhu (John Gross, Ph.D.) is an economist and long time Proutist living in central North Carolina. His interest in PROUT inspired him to obtain graduate training in economics.

US Prisons, Women and the Progressive Utilization Theory

Continued from front cover

tutions as places where people can learn about the deepest aspects of themselves, seek professional and holistic help for mental and physical illnesses, continue their education and explore their talents.

A short time ago in May 2016, over thirty Proutists from around the United States gathered together for a strategic planning process where we chalked out plans for the upcoming year. As part of our time together, we watched Michael Moore's latest film, "Where to Invade Next". In the film, there is a powerful scene of the Bastoy Prison in Norway, where prisoners are treated with full respect and dignity, live in comfortable, open and rural surroundings in wooden cottages and work twenty hours a week on the prison farm. The recidivism rate is just over 15% compared to the European and US average of more than 70%. You can watch the brief clip at the following url:

<https://youtu.be/01mTKDaKa6Q?list=PLf0Qq2ZXYX-QEs-Ss7bnuMRu60U25C23e5>

The longest prison sentence in Norway is 21 years even for the most heinous of crimes, and the country also has the lowest murder rate in the world. When the US Government requested that a person be extradited from Finland to the United States, the Finnish authorities refused, saying that most US prisons do not meet minimum humanitarian standards and thus would jeopardize the rights of the person that the US government wanted extradited. All this to say that we have much work to do here in the United States in terms of transforming prisons from places of abuse and degradation, to places of healing and personal transformation.

Condition for Women in U.S. Prisons

For women inmates, the situation is particularly grim in the United States. Earlier this year, women inmates incarcerated in New York State filed a law suit alleging persistent sexual abuse of female prisoners with impunity for the correctional officers involved in these assaults. You can read the whole article here:

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/26/nyregion/6-in-mates-file-suit-alleging-persistent-sexual-abuse-of-women-in-new-york-state-prisons.html?_r=0

Male inmates also report widespread physical abuse, sexual assault and violence in prisons inflicted by both prison guards and other inmates. Our prison population has mushroomed from 300,000 people incarcerated in the 1970s to over 2.2 million prisoners today representing 25% of the total world's prisoner population. At

least half of people incarcerated in the United States are in prison for non-violent drug offenses, a condition that is not considered criminal in many countries across the world but rather a condition that needs professional treatment, especially if the person is suffering from a substance abuse or addiction issue. To make matters worse, prisoners in the United States are very often exploited by corporations to help them manufacture items for pennies a day, representing a modern day form of extreme labor exploitation and indentured servitude.

Additionally, there are an estimated 10,000 people languishing in our prisons for alleged crimes that they did not commit. Jeffrey Deskovic here in Westchester County, New York, spent over 16 years in prison for a rape and murder that he had nothing to do with. Upon his release and financial settlement for wrongful conviction, he has created the Jeffrey Deskovic Foundation that seeks to find those wrongfully incarcerated and help them work toward their release from prison.

Currently, there are campaigns in New York to create appropriate restitution for those who have been wrongfully incarcerated:

<http://justice4thewrongfullyincarcerated.org/>

as well as impose penalties for prosecutorial misconduct:

<http://www.itcouldhappen2you.org/>

A group of mothers and grandmothers from Harlem, NY, recently organized an 8-day march from Harlem to the New York State Capitol of Albany to highlight the plight of the wrongfully convicted. Marchers included the lead organizer, Sharonne Salaam, and her family members, whose son Yusef was convicted in the 1989 Central Park jogger rape case that Yusef had nothing to do with and yet spent over five years incarcerated for that crime.

What Can Proutists Do?

What are some concrete steps that we can take to ameliorate these deplorable prison conditions in the United States? Some of the things we are doing in Westchester County, New York, include:

- Organizing Letter Writing to Local Prisoners – anyone, anywhere can organize this. You just need to contact your local prison for the names and identification numbers of those incarcerated in your local prison.
- Visiting Local Prisoners – perhaps after the letter writing has begun, as a way to say that we are genuinely concerned about prison conditions and want to hear di-

rectly from the inmates.

- Let prisoners know what resources are available to them. Locally here, Cynthia Weiss has created a mentorship writing program for motivated inmates:

<http://www.transforminglivesny.org/>

If you suspect an inmate is innocent, connect the person with The Innocence Project or the Jeffrey Deskovic Foundation which provide resources to help release the wrongfully convicted.

- Advocating on behalf of Local Prisoners with State Authorities – writing local letters to the Parole Board or State Correctional Authority about your concerns with our prison system. Encourage our prison authorities to visit model prisons in Norway and other places that are having much success by creating healing and nurturing places for people to “repair” themselves in the fullest sense of the word.
- Helping provide transportation for family members to visit loved ones who are incarcerated in hard to get to prisons where there is no public transportation (please see sweetfreedomny.com)
- Working on a campaign to Raise the Age (that a person is tried as an adult) or ban solitary confinement as cruel and unusual punishment or Ban the Box (where potential employers no longer ask about a person’s criminal record on an employment application) so that those who are released have a chance at integration back into our society.

There are many ways to help out and it is so important that we reach the incarcerated and let them know that even though they are caged by our prison industrial complex, they are not forgotten and that there are people on the outside who are working for a genuine transformation of the prison system. Some of the letters that we have received in reply from prisoners include comments about how they felt “human again” to receive a kind letter from the outside. A gesture that we may consider small and inconsequential may have a significant impact on restoring hope for those incarcerated.

Never underestimate the positive power that we can have when good minds come together for a noble purpose. It is important for the millions who remain incarcerated, as well as for those who have been released from the prison system, as they, too, face enormous challenges in dealing with re-entry. Proutists can and should play an important role in transforming our current prison and criminal justice system to one that reflects our cardinal human values of justice, dignity and respect.

Nada Khader has been the executive director of WESPAC Foundation, a peace and justice action network in Westchester County, New York, for the past 14 years – wespac.org.



Report from the Prout Strategic Planning Seminar, Asheville, NC, May 6-8, 2016

By Howard Nemon

From May 6-8, 2016, thirty Proutists from New York Sector came to Ananda Girisuta (Master Unit), in Asheville, North Carolina, to participate in a weekend of discussion and planning. The event was the result of almost 10 months of meetings by a small planning committee that was searching for a way to improve Prout work in the sector. After polling active Proutists, the committee came up with four central questions to address:

1. What is the most effective way to present Prout in this country?
2. What collective Prout projects should we be undertaking, locally and on a national level?
3. How can we recruit and train more Proutists?
4. How can we effectively develop our internal Prout organization?

During the seminar, participants first listened to four short presentations on topics related to these questions and then divided themselves into three work groups. Throughout the rest of the weekend, these groups brainstormed on possible programs and activities and finally designed practical action plans for implementation. During the final session, all three groups represented their plans and discussed ways to coordinate and collaborate among one another.

Seminar participants were very inspired and generally felt that the weekend had created a new wave for Prout work in the sector. They decided to use Base Camp software to keep in touch and continue their work for implementing their action plans. There was also a general consensus for organizing another similar planning seminar in a year’s time, that would also include a public program as well as workshops on Prout topics to deepen everyone’s understanding of the ideology.

Women and Their Rights

By Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

We, men and women, are the progeny of the same Supreme Consciousness. Women and men are equally divine and inherit similar and equal rights to life, liberty and expression. The significance of life does not lie only in living. Animals also live. But life to us means something more—rather something much more.

To us life means living for a great cause. Life implies the endeavor to have the freedom to express one's potentialities in the physical, economic, psychic and spiritual realms. It means real liberty and not license to commit anything good or bad.

In the annals of human history we do find women whose memory glorifies not only womanhood, but the entire human world. In philosophy and spirituality, social reform and educational pursuits, science and technology, they stand second to none. Women are found discussing the riddles of philosophy, solving problems of social and educational reform, and are inspiring men in times of struggle. They have their potentiality no less than men. The difference in natural and biological characteristics between men and women speaks only of coordinated cooperation, not of subordinated cooperation.

Yet the annals of history depict the sad and painful episodes of women's exploitation throughout the world. To fulfill this sinister design, dogmas were created which led to psycho-economic exploitation. Dogmas were cunningly popularized and women were degenerated to slavery. Psychic exploitation has been infused into the minds of women and many symbols which are religiously observed are nothing but symbols of slavery.

In many religions of the world today women are not allowed to become priests in the religious hierarchy.

Women's exploitation is more or less the same everywhere. Is it not a fact that in many countries even fran-

chise rights were not given equally to men and women?

Even today women are slaves to the male-dominated social order. This is not only bad but deplorable. We should decry such domination of women and their psycho-economic exploitation through the evil design of dogmas. To abolish dogma and liberate women from psychic exploitation, there should be:

1. Free education for all women in all countries of the world.
2. No discrimination in the social, educational and religious realms.
3. The provision of economic and social security to all women. We stand to create a powerful, dynamic and upsurging social consciousness, especially among women, so that they are inspired to rise, abolish dogma and annihilate all symbols of slavery, and usher in a new era of coordinated cooperation and glorious achievement. Let women be the vanguard of a new revolution which humanity must achieve for a glorious tomorrow

20 April 1981, Calcutta

From *The Awakening of Women* [a compilation], *Prout in a Nutshell Volume 3 Part 13* [a compilation]

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (21 May 1921 – 21 October 1990), was an Indian philosopher, author, social revolutionary, poet, composer, and linguist. Sarkar founded Prout (Progressive Utilization Theory) in 1959, which is a socio-economic theory based on cooperatives in a local economy in which all people are guaranteed minimum necessities of life and equality of opportunity in an egalitarian society, created for the good and happiness of all.

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