



# TAKE BACK YOUR TIME

OCTOBER 24 WWW.TIMEDAY.ORG

## NEWSLETTER - Fall 2010

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### Letter from the Executive Director – John de Graaf

In Seattle, the summer that hardly ever was is coming to an end. It's been cool and wet here and I was fortunate to get away for two weeks of camping in Yosemite and other parts of Oregon and California. But as we know, many Americans didn't get that opportunity. The costs of our No Vacation Nation policies become clearer all the time, and so does the need to shorten working hours and share work so that all Americans can have a job, but have time for their health, families and communities as well.

I'm reminded that a hundred years ago, President Taft advocated three months vacation for all Americans—something I wrote about in this recent blog post for our wonderful sister organization, MomsRising, which has been leading the fight nationwide for family leave and workplace flexibility. I hope you'll check this out. I think it's ammunition for our cause:

[Back to Work? Not So Fast... « MomsRising Blog](#)  
<http://www.momsrising.org/blog/back-to-work-not-so-fast/>

### 12 ON, 12 OFF FIGHTS OVERWORK IN THE FILM INDUSTRY

A few days ago, I got a call from a legend: the incredible Hollywood

A few days ago, I got a call from a legend: the incredible Hollywood cinematographer Haskell Wexler, who won Emmys for WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF and BOUND FOR GLORY and many more nominations, for such films as ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST, THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR, and others. Haskell, who is still going strong at 84, told me of his campaign to end horrible working conditions for crews in Hollywood, who often work eighteen hour days and weeks in a row. Some crew members have died when they fell asleep at the wheel from exhaustion after these endless sessions caused by the movie industry's push to cut costs.

Haskell made a great documentary on the subject, called WHO NEEDS SLEEP, starring such luminaries as Julia Roberts and Tom Hanks. And now he has a Web site: <http://12on12off.us/blog/> promoting a new organization 12ON/12OFF, which is fighting for more humane conditions. Haskell tells me their fight as the same as ours, only that ours is much broader, but the issues are the same. He hopes we can collaborate on activities and that some of the big Hollywood folks who are supporting his campaign can support us too! We'd be honored to work with Haskell and all of them. Check out his great films and his site!

I was delighted recently to be asked to write the cover article for the September 2010 issue of THE PROGRESSIVE magazine, on the subject of shorter working hours. You can see their great cartoon cover, mocking our workaholic ways, and read part of the article at: [www.progressive.org](http://www.progressive.org). You can read the whole article at: [http://www.alternet.org/story/148061/wake\\_up\\_americans%3A\\_it%27s\\_time\\_to\\_get\\_off\\_the\\_work\\_treadmill](http://www.alternet.org/story/148061/wake_up_americans%3A_it%27s_time_to_get_off_the_work_treadmill)

The article has generated much interest and shows, I think, that people are beginning to take this issue seriously as serious unemployment continues in America.

I'm also delighted to share the news of a new partnership for TAKE BACK YOUR TIME. *The King County Library System*, one of the largest in the nation, is launching its Take Time to Read campaign on October 24<sup>th</sup>, and you can read all about it in this newsletter.

And I'm happy to announce that two TAKE BACK YOUR TIME board members, Joe Robinson and Ben Hunnicutt will be joining me to speak at the "Balanced Lives" policy conference in at the University of Iowa, right before Take Back Your Time Day. Check it out in upcoming events and here: <http://ppc.uiowa.edu/pages.php?id=186>. Hope to see you there!

I'll also be speaking at the first national Convention of the Coffee Party in Louisville, Kentucky, on September 25<sup>th</sup>. As you might suspect, it's an alternative to the Tea Party, hoping for some civility in our politics and some new ideas. I'll be talking about shorter work and slowing down. As Cecile Andrews puts it, I'll be representing the Decaf Wing of the Coffee Party.

I've been reading some great books lately, two of them written by our board members, Bonnie Michaels and Joe Robinson. You'll find more about them in this newsletter. I also love Tom Geoghegan's new book WERE YOU BORN ON THE WRONG CONTINENT? You can read an article based on the book in this newsletter. And I especially want to recommend Juliet Schor's new book, PLENITUDE: THE NEW ECONOMICS OF TRUE WEALTH, a really appealing vision of a future America that works and consumes less. Juliet will also be speaking at the Iowa policy conference. Finally, I'm putting the finishing touches on my own new book, WHAT'S THE ECONOMY FOR, ANYWAY?, written with economist Dave Batker, and based on our film by the same name. Bloomsbury will publish the book late next spring.

I wish all the news were good, but I'm troubled by many things, especially the tone of an attack on me and our ideas from a fellow named Dave who has a blog and a radio program and at one time "friended" me on Facebook. He'd written a piece saying that the Obama stimulus package was costing millions of jobs and I pointed out that the same day, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office had reported that the stimulus

had *saved* 3.3 million jobs. He replied that he didn't believe the CBO and that the government couldn't create jobs; only the private sector could and that what was needed was more tax cutting. I pointed out that the higher tax European countries were handling the recession better than we have, especially Germany, with its work-sharing plans.

He replied that this was because they didn't let "the dregs" of society into their countries. He labels himself a conservative Christian so I said it didn't seem very Christian to call people dregs. He said he could prove that Obama was destroying the country with his deficits. I pointed out that the Bush tax cuts and wars were the primary source of the deficits. He then claimed that those tax cuts had been a huge economic success and that we needed more of them and attacked me as being one of the "elite" who want to steal from the productive members of society.

I replied that since I'd averaged only about \$25,000 a year in recent years, I hardly qualified as an "elite." I explained that I had chosen to work less and earn less and to live simply for ecological reasons and also so I could devote my time to volunteer work such as Take Back Your Time. Here is his final response:

*"John – You are an elitist because you worship the world of the elites; where real men and women do all the heavy lifting so you can “volunteer” by protesting for 4-day work weeks and longer vacations, what a pathetic little man [I was curious about how he knew my height]. The only reason you can “live lightly on earth” with your puny \$25,000/year paycheck is because people like me are picking up the tab. We're the ones who invested our hard earned capital developing the computer you use, the printing presses that enable your boring books to get published, the biotechnology to extend your miserable life, and the silly little Prius you drive [actually, I can't even afford one—I drive a Focus]. And, now we have to pay for your health care too! The only thing I'm not sure about is whether you're lazy, greedy, or just stupid, but you know what – I don't care. Hasta la vista – you pathetic little idiot!"*

His wife added another note telling me to leave the country if I don't like it. I have to admit that I am not completely innocent in this: once, during the tit for tat, Dave called Nobel Prize economist Paul Krugman a stupid fool and I called Dave an arrogant jerk. But his final comments seem a bit over the top to me, not to mention frightening.

I am troubled not only by his ignorance but by the fear of the future these remarks reveal. Clearly the idea that we should work and consume less is very threatening to some Americans. It will take a lot of work to show that the future we advocate is not one of deprivation, but of health, freedom, strong families, social connection and a sustainable future. We just have to keep on keepin' on, as the saying goes.

Leisurely (and hopefully) yours,

John de Graaf

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**NOTE: We still need your financial support. This is now an all-volunteer organization but we cannot help win the fight for more free time, publish this newsletter and keep you informed on air alone. We thank those who have contributed and kept us afloat in hard times but when this newsletter is out we will be down to a couple of hundred dollars in the bank. If we cannot get more support we may not be able to continue this service. So please consider a small (or large if you have it) gift. And please tell us**

what you like and don't like about what we do. Email me at: [jodg@comcast.net](mailto:jodg@comcast.net). PLEASE DONATE TODAY!



## YouTube Channel Update - Alyssa Johnson

A new set of videos are up on our YouTube channel, all from last year's Vacation Matters Summit, which took place at Seattle University in August of 2009. You can access all of the new videos here: <http://www.youtube.com/TakeBackYourTime>

Of course, you can still access the videos that were already posted from this conference as well as the videos from the Gross National Happiness Panel at this summer's Green Fest in Seattle.

Here's a summary of what's new:

### ["Vacation Time as an Environmental Issue" -- David Batker](#)

*Total Time 9:53, [Click here to watch \(total 1 video\)](#).*

**Description:** Asphalt and plastic toys are no longer scarce! Greater happiness now hinges on more leisure time and a sustainable environment. They can only be grown and harvested together in the soil of a new economy.

**About the speaker:** David Batker is Executive Director of Earth Economics, a non-profit showing the economic benefits of nature to people. He has worked for both The World Bank and Greenpeace and is host of the new film, "What's the Economy For, Anyway?"

### ["Confronting the Trinity of Despair" -- Michael Maniates](#)

*Total Time 19:40, [Click here to watch \(PART 1\) \(PART 2\)](#)*

**Description:** One of the major obstacles in changing American vacations will be self-defeating ideas about social change that permeate mainstream environmentalism. Learn how to recognize these ideas and escape the "trinity of despair."

**About the speaker:** Michael Maniates is Professor of Environmental Science and Political Science at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania, and a frequent consultant to college and university programs in environmental studies.

### ["Vacations and Family Time" -- Brian Hill](#)

*Total Time 13:29, [Click here to watch \(PART 1\) \(PART 2\)](#)*

**Description:** A study of 1000 families found that families spend more time together on vacations and weekends and that time together helps increase satisfaction with family life.

**About the speaker:** Brian Hill is a professor and graduate coordinator of Youth and Family Recreation at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. ["The Family Vacation: A Necessity, not a Luxury" -- Sue Shaw](#) *Total Time 18:08, [Click here to watch \(PART 1\) \(PART 2\)](#)* **Description:** Family vacations are of

particular importance for today's highly stressed families. Vacations represent an escape from the pressure of everyday life and an opportunity to strengthen family relationships and create a collective "sense of family."

**About the speaker:** Sue Shaw is a sociologist and a professor in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo, Canada.

### **"Family Vacations: History, Trends, and Current Research" -- Joel R. Agate and Sarah Taylor Agate**

Total Time 29:12, Click here to watch [\(PART 1\)](#) [\(PART 2\)](#) [\(PART 3\)](#)

**Description:** A look at the history of family vacations, the benefits and challenges of family vacations and the current status of family vacation research.

**About the speakers:** Joel Agate is a doctoral student at Clemson University, South Carolina, whose research examines the role of recreation in increasing life satisfaction. Sarah Taylor Agate is a doctoral student in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management at Clemson University, with a focus on family recreation.

### **"Organized Labor's Stake in More Vacation Time" -- Jessica Bonebright and Steve Williamson**

Total Time 35:01, Click here to watch [\(PART 1\)](#) [\(PART 2\)](#) [\(PART 3\)](#) [\(PART 4\)](#)

**Description:** Unions have taken the lead in supporting advances, like the minimum wage, that benefit all workers. Learn how paid vacation for all aligns with the goals and mission of today's organized labor movement.

**About the speakers:** Jessica Bonebright is Research Director for the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), representing 24,000 Boeing workers. Steve Williamson is the Assistant to the President and Community Affairs Director for United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 21, the largest private sector local in Washington State.

### **"Down Time and the Inner Life: The Spiritual Value of Vacation" -- Rebecca Gould**

Total Time 21:39, Click here to watch [\(PART 1\)](#) [\(PART 2\)](#) [\(PART 3\)](#)

**Description:** Over-work and other contributions to time-famine are increasingly undermining spiritual practice in America. Find out how federally supported vacation can be a first step toward supporting our varied spiritual lives.

**About the speaker:** Rebecca Kneale Gould is Associate Professor of Religion and Environmental Studies at Middlebury College. She is the author of AT HOME IN NATURE: MODERN HOMESTEADING AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICE IN AMERICAN CULTURE.

#### **AND MORE:**

I still have more videos up my sleeve from the 2009 Vacation Matters Summit that I will continue to post throughout the fall. If you'd like to be notified when new videos come up, you can subscribe to our channel using either a YouTube or Google account to get updates.

Just go to the site and click "subscribe" near the top of the page: <http://www.youtube.com/takebackyourtime>

Enjoy!

-Alyssa B. Johnson

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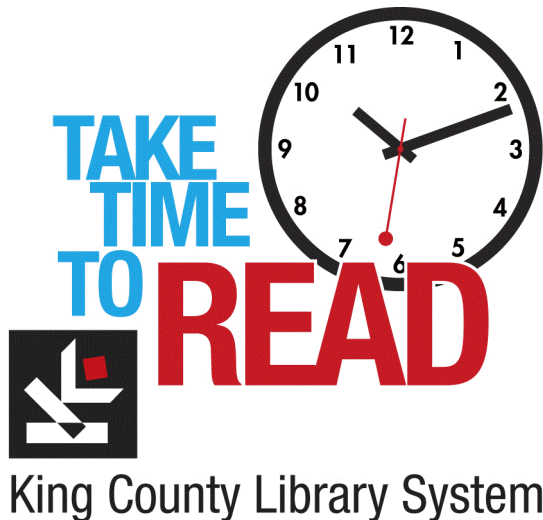
## **BREAKING NEWS! King County Library System to launch Take Time To Read Campaign on Time Day—partnership with Take Back Your Time**

*Take Back Your Time is thrilled to be a partner on this fabulous initiative. Marsha Iverson, King County librarian, sent the following information for our newsletter.*

*You might want to think about doing something like this in your community. What a great way to celebrate Take Back Your Time Day!*

### **RECLAIM YOUR TIME AND NOURISH YOUR MIND: TAKE TIME TO READ!**

By Marsha Iverson



No matter how you measure it, Americans are overbooked and under-read. We work more hours than a medieval peasant, and read less than we did ten years ago. The results are far from trivial. Just as our frenzied work schedules affect our health, our communities, and our sense of well-being, reduced reading time is taking its toll.

That's why the Seattle area *King County Library System* is partnering with *Take Back Your Time* to launch a three-year campaign to make reading a daily activity for everyone. KCLS Community Relations and Marketing Director Julie Brand welcomed the opportunity to combine forces with Take Back Your Time to raise awareness of the importance of leisure and reading: "We chose *Take Back Your Time Day* to launch our *Take Time to Read* program because they go hand-in-hand. The

more time you take back, the more you have to read! It's a natural partnership. "Through our collaboration, we're hoping to encourage libraries across the country to join our effort to make reading America's *second* national pastime," Brand added.

The KCLS **Take Time to Read** campaign begins October 24. The three-year project will feature innovative ways to promote reading for fun.

For the holidays, all 46 branches of the King County Library System will offer free "Gift of Time" cards, encouraging the recipients to *Take Time To Read*. Pick up a supply at the library, or design your own, and give them to your friends and family. Remember to keep a few for yourself as a reminder to take time to read in at least some of that time you take back! Check the King County Library System's Web site: [www.kcls.org](http://www.kcls.org) on Take Back Your Time Day to learn more about the Take Time to Read project.

The National Endowment for the Arts studied American reading habits, producing an alarming report in 2007: *To Read or Not To Read: A Question of National Consequence*. Among their more disturbing findings is the following: On average, Americans ages 15 to 24 spend almost two hours a day watching TV, and only seven minutes of their daily leisure time on reading. Like all skills, reading improves with practice.

The less we read, the worse we get at it. Our vocabularies are dropping, along with reading comprehension, critical thinking and analytical skills.

Young adult author Paul Kropp writes in *The Reading Solution*: “There are almost half a million words in our English Language - the largest language on earth, incidentally - but a third of all our writing is made up of only twenty-two words.” In *Illiterate America*, educator Jonathan Kozol points out: “50 percent of American adults are unable to read an eighth grade level book.”

It’s worse than it sounds. Nationwide, low literacy skills affect employability, productivity, health, lifelong earning capacity, and economic stability. While schools and teachers face much media scrutiny for poor student reading performance, the problem doesn’t begin in school. Children raised by readers become better readers. Children who don’t experience books from the very beginning face lifelong learning challenges. From birth to age five, children’s brains develop the neurological pathways that shape their ability to learn.

Studies show that parents who read to their babies and toddlers for just 20 minutes a day during the first five years help their babies grow the hard-wiring essential for reading. Children who grow up with books, magazines, newspapers, and encyclopedias in the home become better readers than those who don’t. The best way to help your children enjoy reading is to set a good example by reading *to* them, reading *with* them, and reading for the sheer joy of it whenever you can.

There’s a strong link between free time and reading. When we’re totally preoccupied with our ‘to-do’ lists, we don’t read for pleasure. When was the last time you enjoyed the Sunday paper on Sunday? When did you last curl up in a comfy chair with a good book for an hour, and forget what you were worrying about? How long has it been since you snuggled up with your third-grader to read a favorite story out loud, or talked with your teens about what they’re reading? Until reading is a priority in your family, your life, and your community, reading skills are likely to slide.

### **Illiteracy Statistics**

- 42 million American adults can't read at all; 50 million are unable to read at a higher level that is expected of a fourth or fifth grader.
- The number of adults that are classified as functionally illiterate increases by about 2.25 million each year.
- 20 percent of high school seniors can be classified as being functionally illiterate at the time they graduate.

*Source: National Right to Read Foundation*

### **Where Illiteracy Leads**

- 70 percent of prisoners in state and federal systems can be classified as illiterate.
- 85 percent of all juvenile offenders rate as functionally or marginally illiterate.
- 43 percent of those whose literacy skills are lowest live in poverty.

*Source: National Institute for Literacy*

### **Bureau of Labor Statistics**

**American Time Use Survey Summary, 2009** Time spent reading for personal interest and playing games or using a computer for leisure varied greatly by age. Individuals age 75 and over averaged 1.0 hour of reading per weekend day and 26 minutes playing games or using a computer for leisure. Conversely, individuals ages 15 to 19 read for an average of 5 minutes per weekend day while spending 1.0 hour playing games or using a computer for leisure.

<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.nr0.htm>

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### **UPSIDE: HOW TO ZIG WHEN LIFE ZAGS—A new book by Board Member Bonnie Michaels**

Bonnie Michaels offers excellent counsel for everyone in hard times, showing how smart life changes can help us cope with the current economic turmoil and get on a path to a more sustainable personal life. This is a “self-help” book to savor without the usual hype and with plenty of very sensible advice. The book includes a “holistic plan that integrates personal, financial, professional and spiritual goals,” and a series of exercises that will be useful to anyone. The Web site is: [www.upsidethebook.com](http://www.upsidethebook.com). Check it out! --John de Graaf

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### **FROM OUR BOARD MEMBERS**

#### **THE NEW YORK TIMES SAYS WE'RE RIGHT**

*From board member Joe Robinson—Joe has a new book out too!*

The *New York Times* ran a story in August (“But Will It Make You Happy,” Aug. 7) that advances the cause of Take Back Your Time and the value of leisure time better than anything the media has done so far. It detailed that experiences like vacations make us happier than material things and that only one category of consumption has been linked with an increase in happiness: leisure! The consumption findings are super-compelling and back everything we’ve been saying in the time movement. The research comes from Thomas DeLeire at the University of Wisconsin.

I’m ecstatic to see the science validating our efforts, and I’ve got a lot more of that in my new book, *Don’t Miss Your Life* (out Oct. 25), which explores how experiences, and specifically leisure experiences, have the power to make us happier than anything else. Researchers have found that humans are at their happiest when they are involved in engaging leisure experiences. The critical factor is the engagement level. Most of us have been taught to be spectators, watching the professionals do the participating. The magic comes when we participate to the fullest in our own lives through active leisure experiences.

Experiences can’t be compared to anyone else’s experiences. They are personal events that stick with us, unlike material objects, which wear off or are trumped by somebody else’s better item. These interactive times root us in the moment of full engagement, causing multiple neuron firings that live on in our memories, which tell us whether we like our life or not. With the latest research, and adventures in the field doing samba dancing, dragon boat paddling, and playing badminton, I show how we can develop the skills of life intelligence—from intrinsic motivation to attention-directing and pursuit of competence—that allow us to find optimal experiences and our best life.

To build support for a change in vacation and work policies, we have to change the mentality that locks the overwork culture in place. *Don’t Miss Your Life* can do that. They can’t argue with the science. Let’s get this topic into the national conversation. We can change the dynamic right here, from having to feel guilty about having a life, to celebrating leisure experiences as the way to satisfy our core needs, which the research tells us they do better than anything else.

Check out *Don't Miss Your Life* and spread the word to others. I hope you'll pre-order before November 1 if you can. Thanks very much for your support. I hope you'll connect with me and continue the conversation at [twitter.com/worklifeskills](https://twitter.com/worklifeskills) and on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000499577821>

Joe Robinson  
Work to Live

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## CREATING A TAKE BACK YOUR TIME CALENDAR

*From Board Member Greg Wright*

I do hope we will be able to assemble a *Take Back Your Time Calendar* of policy tidbits about most of the world's advanced countries (a group of which the U.S. ostensibly a member) -- and the consistently negative comparison with the U.S. -- in each of the days of the month, in twelve categories of accumulating numerical comparison, such as Paid Leave for Mothers, Paid Leave for Fathers, Paid Sick Leave, Paid Vacation Leave, Maximum Workweek, Family Leave, Part-Time Work Policies, etcetera.

Our first pair of tasks is to assemble a list of twelve topic areas that will be covered, one at a time, in each of the twelve months of the year, and to determine which organizations and scholars might best help us gather reliable country-by-country data about laws on these categories. Maybe:

- Paid Sick Leave
- Paid Vacation Leave
- Paid Leave for Mothers
- Paid Leave for Fathers
- Maximum Workweek
- Part-Time Work Policies
- Carbon Footprint per capita
- Carbon Footprint per country/culture
- Pension Policies
- Commuting Miles / Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per person
- etcetera

As for organizations and websites, maybe the websites of authors such as Steven Hill ([www.steven-hill.com](http://www.steven-hill.com)), and certain staffers at organizations such as the New America Foundation ([www.newamerica.net](http://www.newamerica.net)) and the Center for Economic and Political Research ([www.cepr.net](http://www.cepr.net)) can help us get the data we need? And then we can collect the info in a Snapfish calendar ([www.snapfish.com](http://www.snapfish.com)) or Google Calendar (<http://calendar.google.com>), or perhaps just asIf you want to help Greg with this let us know!

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*If your state hasn't already banned cell phone use while driving this great piece from board members Tom and Judy Turnipseed ought to help convince your legislators:*

<http://www.zcommunications.org/cell-phones-texting-and-apps-by-tom-turnipseed>

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*From board member Kelley Smith:*

One thing that bothers me about Keynesians is they seem to not really grasp the reality of ecological limits. Yes, you can do deficit spending to stimulate demand, provided there is no harmful damage to the ecosystem from that increased production and consumption. Ecological limits are (for me) as important a reason for job-sharing or reduced hours or whatever you call it as is avoiding a permanently underemployed underclass. (and that doesn't mean that I don't think the unemployed underclass issue is vital)  
Kelleyunderemployed underclass. (and that doesn't mean that I don't think the unemployed underclass issue is vital)  
Kelley

*From board member Cathy O'Keefe, who wrote this wonderful piece in response to a reporter's questions about vacation time:*

## **VACATIONS AS SACRED TIME**

Why is leisure important? Notice that I didn't say "leisure time" but "leisure." That's because leisure isn't about time, though free time certainly gives us more opportunities for leisure. Leisure has traditionally been described in terms of time and activity, but the essential quality of leisure is "state of mind." Think about it - you can be doing all sorts of activity that an observer might say look enjoyable, but that value judgment is clearly only in the mind of the person who experiences it.

In an ideal world, we'd say what Robert Frost wrote (Two Tramps in Mud Time):

*My object in living is to unite  
My avocation and my vocation  
As my two eyes make one in sight.  
Only where love and need are one,  
And the work is play for mortal stakes,  
Is the deed ever really done  
For Heaven and the future's sakes.*

Leisure has largely been commercialized in American culture, but it is really a spiritual experience that connects with the deepest needs of the human heart to be elevated to a perspective that is greater and deeper. Leisure comes from the root "licere" which means freedom, and I believe is the freedom to become your true self since the true self is at our core, our real identity. The true self longs to be aware, alive, creative, reflective, in touch with deeper truths and realities. We spend little time teaching people to be open to leisure, but we certainly spend (money that is) on things we hope will bring us pleasure. What a lot of us in this field hope is that we can understand that "vacation" means to vacate, to leave the ordinary, to go out from something that is mundane to something that is leisure.

We don't have to go far since the real vacation takes place in our thoughts, our attitudes, and our feeling of well-being that comes from a real vacation. I can have that experience in contemplating an image in my mind, but better, getting to places where those images are created. That's why getting out into nature is such a popular way to access leisure. It's different from the place where most of us live and labor, and it offers an intrinsic opportunity to connect with physical beauty and spirituality. John Muir saw this in Yosemite. As the son of a minister, everything he sought in the Divine came to him in nature.

Vacations should be seen as sacred time, made sacred because we consciously choose to seek well-being through whatever it is we want to experience during our free time. In a country that is languishing on bench marks of health, how sad that we don't value well-being enough to legally protect a person's right to it. Instead, Americans spend billions on medications and strategies to keep us working without the need for sick leave. If we took regular vacations and really understood what we needed from those vacations, perhaps we'd be a healthier population.

Sadly, the "fundamental changes in the way people are taking vacations" is reflected in the data indicating that we take fewer vacations, and 28% of us took none at all last year.

Joe Robinson, author of "Work to Live," is an outstanding resource on this issue. Now the culture is creating terms like "micro-vacation" and "mini-vacations" to describe what Americans are having more of - a one-day getaway, or long weekend. The vacation that could help us most - 3-4 weeks for time to unwind, enjoy, and return are not on the radar screen for most Americans.

America is alone among industrialized nations in its lack of legal protection for vacation. Most of our national peers give 4-6 weeks of vacation to citizens each year. In the , there is even a culture against vacationing within many businesses. Employees tell us that if they take a vacation, it is perceived as a sign of unwillingness to go the extra mile, to work as hard as the next person. And that pressure is elevated in economies where unemployment suggests that any worker not willing to give up vacation for work should look around at all the people who would love to have the job and would work without time off. The ideal American work ethic suggests that the best workers are those who are more loyal to their jobs than to anything else. I believe that the economy is an excuse to divert us from a more fundamental question - what is a meaningful life, and what kind of balance between work and leisure best gets us there.

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*From board member Eileen McDargh*

Here's my news: my recently released DVD, *Gifts From the Mountain- Simple Truths for Life's Complexities*, just won the Silver Telly AWARD--the highest award for commercial videos! We shot it at 12,500 feet in the Rockies.

*Congratulations, Eileen!!*

*From board member Alison Link:*

Just wanted to say hello from the World Leisure Congress in Korea, I have been a TBYT advocate and mentioned TBYT in my presentation on "Sustainable leisure education" many times. I even showed/shared a few posters! Hope all is well. I can't believe it is almost TBYT Day again. -Alison

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## **TAKE BACK YOUR TIME IN THE NEWS**

*Carl Honore (IN PRAISE OF SLOWNESS) and John de Graaf were interviewed on the NPR program, A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES*

<http://aworldofpossibilities.org/program/life-in-slo-mo>

*Great piece from THE NEW INTERNATIONALIST includes praise for Take Back Your Time.*

<http://www.newint.org/features/2010/07/01/workers-of-world-relax/>

*Former board member Tom Walker of Vancouver, BC has created a Facebook site called Working Less So All Can Work: A Strategy for Progressives. To see more details follow the link below:*

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Working-Less-So-All-Can-Work-A-Strategy-for-Progressives/145800502118723>

*Americans are still giving up vacation days, as these two articles reveal:*

[Collecting vacation days: Why some people just won't go away](http://suburbanjournals.stltoday.com/articles/2010/09/02/monroe/news/0901cvj-vacations000000.txt)

<http://suburbanjournals.stltoday.com/articles/2010/09/02/monroe/news/0901cvj-vacations000000.txt>

[Over-Worked Americans Give Up an Average of 459 Million Vacation ...](#)

PR Newswire

[Danny Westneat | Rethinking go-go ways at Shi Shi beach | Seattle ...](#)

**John de Graaf** laughed joyfully when I told him this story. "Yes!" he cried. "Less work, more life. Once you get it, you don't want to go back." De Graaf is ...

[seattletimes.nwsourc.com/.../2012625099\\_danny15.html?...](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/.../2012625099_danny15.html?...)

[Vacations Nourish the Spirit — sunnylam.ca](#)

The piece is by **John De Graaf** who directs the Take Back Your Time initiative .... **John de Graaf** is the co-author of "Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic" ...

[sunnylam.ca/2010/08/vacations-nourish-the-spirit/](http://sunnylam.ca/2010/08/vacations-nourish-the-spirit/)

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## OTHER NEWS STORIES ABOUT TIME AND WORK

*From Juliet Schor, author of THE OVERWORKED AMERICAN*

### **THE WORK-SHARING BOOM: EXIT RAMP TO A NEW ECONOMY?**

To cope with the recession, some companies are cutting hours instead of employees. Will the trend have long-term effects?

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/the-work-sharing-boom-exit-ramp-to-a-new-economy>

['Unplug' this vacation](#)

MLive.com

Debate in the NY Times on vacations - lots of great stories and opinions:

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2010/8/4/why-dont-americans-have-longer-vacations/who-deserves-vacation-more>

*From Dr. Lonnie Golden, an expert on work-time.*

My piece (a bit heavy on the academic-speak ...) is: *A Purpose for Every Time? The Timing and Length of the Work Week and Implications for Worker Well-Being*

<http://connecticutlawreview.org/index.htm>

Lonnie Golden, Ph.D.

Professor of Economics and Labor Studies

Penn State University, Abington College

*A little humor from the Onion about overwork. Check this one out folks--not so far from the truth:*

<http://www.theonion.com/video/new-portable-sewing-machine-lets-sweatshop-employee,14295/>

*A short version of Tom Geoghegan's great book by the same title:*

Were You Born on the Wrong Continent? How Europe builds better products for better lives [and six weeks' vacation]

By Thomas Geoghegan

[http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/6194/what\\_we\\_can\\_learn](http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/6194/what_we_can_learn)

*Humorous piece from the BBC about American vacation time*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-11139960>

*Great humor from THE ECONOMIST about American vacations:*

<http://www.economist.com/node/16846330>

*Nic Marks is with the New Economic Foundation, which advocates shorter work-time. Here is his TED talk about the Happy Planet Index:*

[http://www.ted.com/talks/nic\\_marks\\_the\\_happy\\_planet\\_index.html?utm\\_source=newsletter\\_weekly\\_2010-08-31&utm\\_campaign=newsletter\\_weekly&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.ted.com/talks/nic_marks_the_happy_planet_index.html?utm_source=newsletter_weekly_2010-08-31&utm_campaign=newsletter_weekly&utm_medium=email)

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## **UPCOMING EVENTS—University of Iowa public policy conference features Juliet Schor, Joe Robinson, Ben Hunnicutt and John de Graaf**

Take Back Your Time Executive Director John de Graaf and Board members Joe Robinson and Ben Hunnicutt will be among the presenters at a public policy conference BALANCED LIVES, at the University of Iowa October 20-22, right before Take Back Your Time Day. The conference is priced at \$75 (\$40 for students) so that as many people as possible can attend. Other speakers include Chris Hoenig, who designed the new Key National Indicators Program (see [www.stateoftheusa.org](http://www.stateoftheusa.org)) that was part of the Obama health care bill, noted author Juliet Schor, Ambassador to the OECD Karen Kornbluh, MomsRising Executive Director Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner and citizen engagement expert Harry Boyte. Participants will have the opportunity to propose indicators of the new national system. Find out more at:

<http://ppc.uiowa.edu/pages.php?id=186>.

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## **CELEBRATE TAKE BACK YOUR TIME DAY!**

This year TAKE BACK YOUR TIME DAY falls on a Sunday and on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the date on which the 40 hour week officially became the law of the land in the US. The law was passed in 1938 as part of the Fair Labor Standards Act and required of businesses beginning in 1940. So do you what you can to celebrate the 40-hour work week and suggest a theme of “75 years is long enough—it’s to shorten working hours again!” If you’re active in a church encourage them to spend some time this Take Back Your Time day talking about the idea of the Sabbath and of the need for downtime in life. Encourage them to practice the Four Windows of Time model developed by the Massachusetts Council of Churches, taking four times between Time Day and New Year’s to simply schedule nothing and spend time with friends, family or nature. Here’s a poster you can use for this:

<http://www.timeday.org/pdf/4windowSnow.pdf>

Please let us know if you do something to celebrate Time Day—send photos etc. It's a great time for faculty to get students thinking about the value of leisure, for example. Give a talk, sponsor a teach-in (find ideas in the Take Back Your Time handbook), have a celebration with Frisbees, dogs and music. Go for it!

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### LETTERS

I recently published an article in which I advocate work time reduction as a means of solving environmental problems and preserving natural resources. It is an academic paper that is a bit technical in places, but it may be of some interest to the readers of your newsletter, to which I subscribe. Here is the paper:

<http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/bsi/article/view/2789/2576>

Thanks for your fine work,

Lyle K. Grant, Ph.D. | Professor | Centre for Psychology  
Athabasca University | (888) 449-0105

#### **Editor's note: this is a great article!**

I believe you should introduce a bill that says full time employees should get a minimum of 4 weeks paid vacation per year and 2 weeks for part time employees. We need to catch up to other western countries who think we are just a bunch of overworked Americans with no time for family and friends. I know it will take time for this to happen but I believe the key to getting this done is always being positive and persistent. Even in these tough economic times, this is still America. I hope you can accomplish this goal for all those Americans (including me) so we can live happier and healthier lives. Cheers !

Robert

**RE: The Time to Care Six Point Agenda:** I would especially like to see this agenda enacted because time poverty restricts folks from having time to think about, learn about, and care for our natural environment. All the extra hours spent in air-conditioned offices, and working overtime, cuts us off emotionally and mentally from the natural earth processes that sustain us. Thanks for the opportunity for input!

Krista, Walnut, CA.

Well, it seems to me that the only difference between 25 percent unemployment and a 25 percent reduction in hours of work is the absence of a natural mechanism to reduce wages, and about 5 trillion dollars of new public debt. Both of those imply higher real wages with less work -- but, of course, I only have an undergraduate degree in economics, so there may be something I missed in the graduate courses. (I hear they hold all the real secrets on how the economy works until then.) Given the choice between further debasing the nation's currency and more time at the beach, I would prefer more time on the beach.

--Jehu, Massachusetts

#### **From a reader in New Jersey in response to John's *Progressive* article:**

I read your article with interest. I am from the Netherlands. My husband and I often discuss the work / life balance. I am very fortunate that I can be a stay at home mom and live a comfortable life, which would not have been possible in Holland with just one income.

However, I do some freelance work on the side, just to stay sane - I just can't be a full time mom. If we were in Holland, I would work 3 days a week and my husband would work 4 days a week. (at least all of my friends do....) The days off are accepted and respected by co workers. We would take vacations to other European countries twice a year. It sounds so ideal and we would not mind moving back, but we are very

happy here and it is hard to put in words why (perhaps because we already have the European work ethic and refuse to work ourselves to death?) &

The US work ethic should change. My husband has a senior manager level position and is relatively flexible in his work hours: sometimes he works long days, other times he can come home early. But he always takes time off to be with the family for graduations, first days of school, etc etc. Now that his vacation days have increased from 2 to 4 weeks, we are happy with the work life balance - in part because my husband refuses to let work take over his life.

On the other hand, I worked for an airline - a ground staff position which required only a high school degree. I loved the job but had to quit because of the work life balance; I was "punished" for taking time off to be with my son in the ER. I worked every single weekend and holiday for 2 years straight - no overtime or weekend compensation. I had three vacation days the first year, which were assigned to me, I did not choose the days. The second year I had a week vacation but was unable to take them when I needed to take the days off.

Meanwhile, my counterparts in NL scratched their heads and wondered how this was possible and why we accepted this. Dutch law states that you can only work one weekend a month (and get paid overtime) you can work only a certain amount of holidays a year, and can take time off for family emergencies.

The point I am trying to make is that higher level positions often allow for work life balance, but people do not take advantage of it because "it is not done" it is not part of the US culture. Lower level positions do not have work life balance, period! The Netherlands can and should be an example that you can have a thriving economy, happy employees, etc. while working reasonable hours.

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