



BALLE BEAT

Judy Wicks

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP in the fifties and discovered that girls weren't allowed to play softball in gym class, much less join the Little League, I figured girls must be losers. Boys played the important roles, while girls looked on cheering for the best competitors. Left out of the game, I rejected feminine values as sissy stuff, and refused to participate in doll playing, cooking and sewing, meant to prepare girls for a life of caring and sharing as mothers and wives. And of course, I would never wear pink! While we have made great strides, many women of my generation have gotten into the game by diminishing the feminine and developing our masculine qualities — learning to keep a “stiff upper lip” — and compete in careers in business, politics, and even the military.

Over time, I've come to realize that having the opportunity to compete in a man's world is not enough. What the world needs now are the feminine qualities of compassion, cooperation, and generosity in transforming the values of our society and developing the character of our children, both boys and girls, with a healthy balance of the masculine and feminine. The drive to dominate other people and nature, competing for more and more wealth and power, may have won advances in economic prosperity for some of the world's people (for now). But we are left in spiritual and environmental bankruptcy with a society known for violence, greed, and the

prospect of endless war to control the dwindling supply of oil, clean water, and other natural resources. For this, we are all the losers.

A society which measures success by how much we accumulate, has desensitized us to the violence and suffering that underlie materialism — the suffering of animals, of nature, of children, of other peoples, and even of ourselves. After reading about the atrocities of corporate factory farms which dominate the food industry, where pigs, chickens and cows suffer horribly for the sake of increased profit, I realized I could not build my own success on the suffering of other beings. After my restaurant, The White Dog Café, converted our purchasing to family farmers who practice humane husbandry, I thought at first that this would be our market niche —

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the only cruelty free menu in town!

Then I thought to myself, “If you really do care about those animals, if you care about the environment that's being polluted by factory farms, if you care about the family farmers being driven out of business, if you care about consumers who are eating meat full of antibiotics and hormones, then forget about your market niche and help your competitors do the same!” That's when I started our first nonprofit program, Fair Food, which helps restaurants connect with local farmers. Later on, I started a local BALLE network to

share best practices in all areas of business. I realized then that it was not enough to have good business practices within my company. To protect what I really care about, I had to share my resources and work in partnership to build an entire local economy based on those values. It was calling upon my feminine qualities once dismissed as a child, expanding my own capacity to care and to share, that moved me from a competitive business outlook to one of cooperation.

The emergence of feminine power, bringing balance and harmony, is essential to the survival of our civilization — to build an economy aligned with natural systems and based on cooperation and sharing, rather than competition and hoarding, to design public policies based not on military and economic domination, but on partnership with other countries, and with compassion for all of life.

It is time to call upon the feminine in each of us — to hear the cry of the pigs in the crates, of the cow for her calf. To hear the cry of those abused in the fur industry, in cosmetic testing, in sweatshops and chocolate production. To hear the cry of the children in Iraq, where over 100,000 citizens have been killed in the American war over oil. To hear the cry of children in our own country, where one in four live in poverty due to our misplaced priorities. To hear the cry of the whales, of the birds, of the trees, of a natural world that is dying around us. Bring forth the Goddess in each of us to hear, to care and to heal. □

Judy Wicks is the owner of the White Dog Cafe (www.whitedog.com) in Philadelphia, and cochair of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE). Join Judy for BALLE's 4th Annual Conference on June 8-10, 2006 in Burlington, Vermont (www.livingeconomies.org).

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