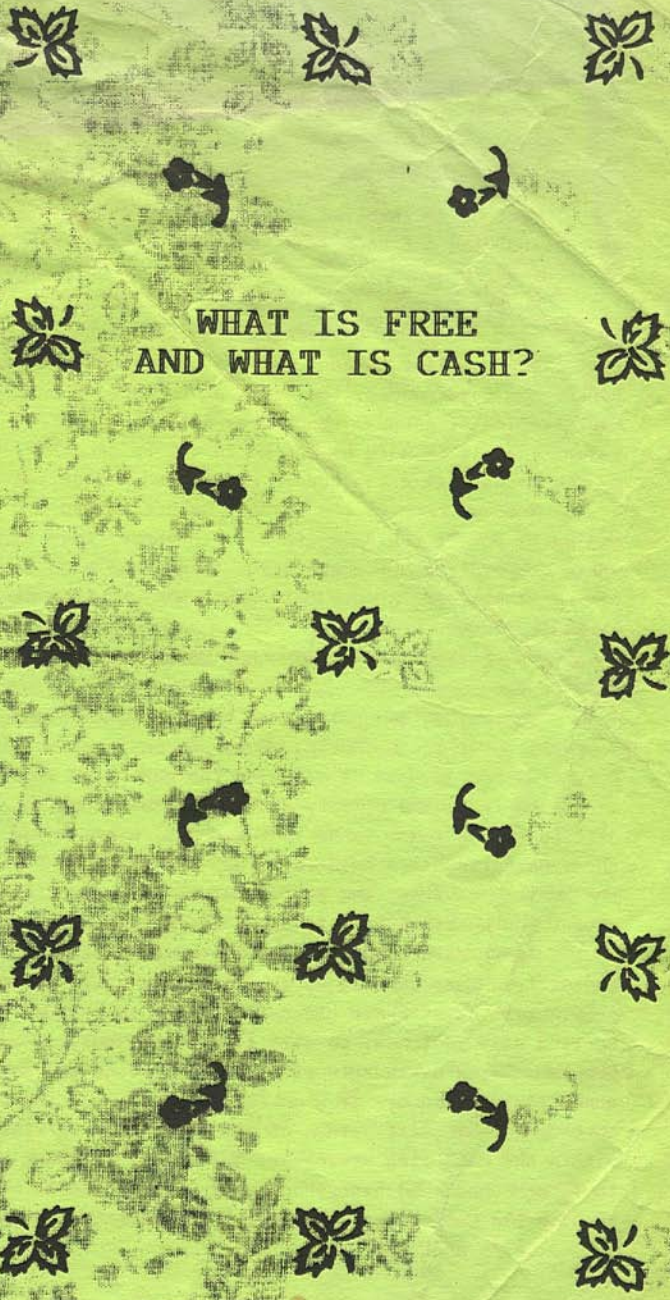




WHAT IS FREE
AND WHAT IS CASH?



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by Garrick Beck

I

Most of us involved in the Rainbow work year-round in one way or another earning our keep -- as all human beings seem bound to -- by the sweat of our brows.

We try to make it as decently as possible, by trading our crafts, by creating our arts, by working with the earth, by providing services that aid our fellow humans, etc. But the money system is so tied into the banks, the governments, the armed protectors of real estate, the exploitation of natural resources: inflation, interest, rent raises, taxes, that it is hard as can be to get by decently, surrounded as we are by the mainstream crush toward mammon and its dollah-sign gratification.

When we come to the Rainbow Gatherings we are stepping into a vision of How It Can Be -- in a world where "Love *is* all you need," where cooperation not competition is what we have among us and where we can -- if even for a moment in the sun -- be free of the chains society throws over us.

The buying and selling that go on at the Gathering are the biggest hole in our bucket.

The buying and selling of beads, blankets, baubles, candy bars, sacraments, at the Gathering, deny the basic principles of Rainbow Consciousness just as do damaging the earth and violence.

In fact, the primary single most distinguishing factor that differentiates these Gatherings from All Other Human Events is that these Gatherings are held for Free: the entry is free, the food is free, the healing is free, the labor that sets up and cleans up is freely given, the entertainment is free, the workshops are free, and so on.

If we as a People, if we as individuals, do not stop the buying and selling that goes on we will lose the whole Gathering. We will find people selling us their close-in parking spaces; we will find people selling us sandwiches; we will find people selling us beer; we will find people selling us shuttle rides; we will find the government demanding money (lots of money) from us for our right to Gather on account of the spreading commercial nature of the Gathering; we will find police busts within the Gathering perimeter; and lastly and most sad we will find that the brotherhood and sisterhood that comes to these events loses interest because the Gatherings will have lost their unique quality....

Think about it.

The traders circle has done little if anything to stop the spread of commercialism. True, there have been some attempts but these have never worked. The council, too, has brought up the issue, and reached agreed upon proposals but the sellers generally have not cooperated.

The only hope is for everyone concerned to take action: an active, clear, vocal consumer boycott of anyone doing commercial biznez at the family's Gathering. Humor them, preach to them, teach them, occupy them, confront them each and every and at all times when people come to our family cathedral and try to sell us goods. It is only by sharing that we will get out of the pit the rest of the world is in.

It is only by sharing that we humans can undo the old myths and get back into the garden where we rightfully belong.

When our brother and sister show up, from the front gate to the trail home we want to share a community that in Real Life is beyond the rule and rules of Violence, Prejudice and Cash.

II

Years ago in the early days of these Gatherings we printed a booklet called The Rainbow Oracle. In it was an article titled "What is Free and What is Trade?" which asked many many questions and drew a few conclusions. Among them was the idea that trading between two individuals in a single unique situation was within these people's free rights; but this is a far cry from persons coming to the Gathering with any form of commercial intent. It is far far away from persons selling melons or weavings or t-shirts or what some of us consider sacraments. It is far away from rainbow buttons or rainbow doodahs (no matter how slick or organic) being sold in the meadows and at the front gate.

Everyone involved has their special story, their "need," their "costs," but so do we all: the people who bring the giant kitchenware bring it to share, the people who bring the medicines and bandages and shelters have their own costs to bear, the people who drop money in the Magic Hat do it out of love for the whole of us, and the people who come and give it away are the Rainbow.

When we come to the Gathering, between us and the rest of the world there is a spiritual place, and when we cross that place into the place within, within the Gathering, we are entering sacred ground -- only if we make it that way and only if we keep it that way

The government loves it when we trade for cash. They love seeing our unity diluted by their money. And they watch us carefully. We have

recorded the federalés again and again photographing the exchange of cash, noting it in their notebooks. They have every intention of using this evidence of our "commercial use of public lands" against us. To them this is validation that we are not a spiritual family in our natural temple. They would love to see the use of money overrun our free environment.

If we try to police our operation we will only drive the sales and purchase trip underground. Again, our sole hope is peer group communication on a very direct, massive, constant level, instituting a consumer boycott and relentlessly communicating these ideas until they are strongly understood by enough of us. Then we can continue toward our long-term goals of evolving a fundamentally Free and beautiful future.