

“...the functioning world requires...a transmutation of the whole social order...so that through every detail and act of secular life the vitalizing image of the god-man who is actually immanent and effective in all of us may be somehow made known to consciousness.” Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

**More** than any of our programs, it is *the idea* of *The Other Side* that keeps me working at this labor of love. Ideas are necessary to invite in the energy that can sustain not-for-profit, “pipedream” efforts like ours. It is not farfetched to point to the era of the founding of this country to see vividly the effect of ideas on human action. As Orin and I watch the excellent HBO series *John Adams* on a MWPAI Library DVD, we observe men and women inspired with the possibility of creating something new, and also terrified by the same possibility. Like the contemporary Tea Partiers, who also are inspired by ideas, however flawed, we believe this is a time for ideas and for the revolution only big ideas can animate and energize.

Our name itself points to one of the chief ideas behind our existence: in these times dominated by a single, user-friendly corporate reality, we more than ever need that “other side.” We need to know that the flattened reality defined and circumscribed by powerful corporate motives and their for-profit vision, is *not* the whole story. By every inducement possible, we the public are encouraged to lie back and accept that *reality*; in effect we are persuaded that all we have to concern ourselves with is that which can be experienced by expending little- to-no effort, as if “easy” were more real than that which requires conscious effort. That is a bit like saying McDonald’s food is more “real” than the meals we make laboriously by hand at home, or as if TV nature series were more real than riding your bike in the Proctor Parks, or as if the Learning Channel rates right up there with the passion-inspired search to find out the facts for yourself.

Effortless, and convenient, and charmingly easy, the world controlled for us by a set of mediating experiences is designed ultimately by somebody else, not necessarily for our good. The more we are charmed by this world of convenience, the further we are from *experience*, and therefore from the ideas that are so dangerous to the status quo. To the extent we allow ourselves to be isolated and electronically empowered kings and queens at the controls of our ipods and Kindles and our scores of Facebook friends, settled comfily in front of our NPR News, or behind the wheel of our personal car, it is easy to let others worry about where the ship is headed, including the ship of our own brief span of years.

It is human nature to accept the given as “reality,” but I submit that never before have so many powerful means been provided to limit the imaginations and the ability to think and question of the majority of us “common people” sitting in our Platonic “caves” watching those realistic and commercially inspired shadows dancing on the walls. The chances to encounter any sign that there is more to life than the dominant reality, are slenderer and slenderer. There is not just “the fog of war,” but the fog induced by mass media, mass education, corporate jobs, consumerism and materialism that have us less than clear about our proper area of concern.

*The Other Side* hopes to serve as a conduit for other voices that remind us *there is* another side, a valid Archimedean point from which to question and resist the dominant hegemonic, monocultural voice. This side which might be called “awakeness,” or “consciousness,” is a very tiny voice indeed crying in the wilderness. Though it is well-nigh impossible to compete with Netflix for “what to do” on an evening, *The Other Side* continues to offer activities to draw people out into face-to-face experiences and conversations. We believe that such experiences help to counter the “one voice” of corporate free market culture, to keep us *awake* and connected in a community

With these understandings we continue to offer *The Other Side* as an “alt” community space within which ideas and events make sense according to an "old-fashioned," but somewhat edgy and revolutionary notion of what it is to be human and to be community. As alienated as modern life has become, there is still no such thing as human beings without community; the more we try to live in this society as if this were not so, the more damage we endure and the more damage we do. From the feedback I receive, I know that people in this community appreciate our little space and the programs we produce here. Last season was an especially successful one for our **Talkin' 'Bout Jazz Swing City** jazz series, as well as the ongoing series of **lectures** by Hamilton College scholars. We as well hosted popular **Latin Dance** classes with Jessica Novillo, a couple of very well-received **poetry readings** by the crew of the "Rag and Bone Shop Poetry Theater," a popular **story-telling workshop** hosted by Katrina Schell and Lynne Burns, **yoga** classes with Stephanie van Savage, a showing of **REUtica**, a film by two local activist filmmaker brothers, and much more. A special pleasure for me is *The Other Side's* sponsorship of the new ***Doubly Mad***, the journal of arts and ideas originally put out by Orin and me, which had been out of publication for several years. Under the leadership of Will Welch and a sturdy band of volunteers, we again have a local publication featuring regional art and writing.

These programs and events gain a deeper significance from the fact that they happen *against* the tides of the times. The so-called "flow," as in "going with the flow," is not a flow; it is a breakdown and a collapse. At my Christiana family reunion in July we elders and a sprinkling of youngsters sat on a hot day under the grand old weeping spruces in my brother's yard in Holland Patent and talked. A dear relative, successful in the world of global corporate capitalism, explained to us “relative” bumpkins how that world works. “*It keeps moving*,” he said, “and *so we all* (meaning the players in that global corporate world he meets and consults with) *have to keep moving with it*.” But toward *where*, I wonder, is it moving, and isn't that direction exactly our responsibility, not something pre-ordained that all of us must fall into lockstep behind?

Fewer people are asking such questions, or registering opinions on these matters of ultimate purpose. To me this is exactly where a call to "epic living" comes in. Today we have no collective goal providing the field for heroism on the order of WWII, or of opposing Communist domination. In fact, heroic action today may be *precisely* in resisting what appears to be the dominant goal of the culture and its headlong movement toward the destruction of the planet. It may be in refusing the reduction of humanity and insisting on the full reality of human *being*, which includes the soul and the imagination, realms not belonging exclusively to artists, poets and saints, but to all of us.

I think of *The Other Side*, as well as the Cafe Domenico, now beginning its 10th year of doing business in Utica, as on the side of that resistance which is at the same time, a *defense* of the sacred heart of things - a small local place that stands for the whole such that participation in it connects one to larger energies and meanings than Utica alone. *The Other Side* hopes you will continue to support us in building a local Utica culture of resistance that is also and equally a culture of celebration of humanness and human community. **Please consider, in these tough economic times, a donation to *The Other Side*, either in the form of a monthly or quarterly pledge, or an outright amount. Donations are tax deductible.** Make checks out to **The Other Side, c/o Kim Domenico, 17 Grant St., Utica NY 13501.** And if you like the kind of sermonizing I do, check out one of my monthly Temenos talks, beginning Sunday, September 18, 11:00 a.m. in our space.

