

The “Nation” Caribbean Cruise Dec 9-16, 2012

Just in case you did not know, Nancy and I floated in a 2,400-passenger cruise boat in the western Caribbean last week. Lest you think this was a sudden flight from reality, we signed up for this Nation Magazine Cruise 6 months ago.



Nancy on the New Amsterdam surrounded by a herd of Cruise Ships in Fort Lauderdale

We embarked on this cruise in one of Fort Lauderdale’s ports. The city swells gigantically with the coming and goings of cruise boats. On an average winter weekend, 21 cruise boats enter and leave the port. With an average of 4,000 passengers and 1,000 crew members, it adds up to a flow of over 100,000 people each weekend. That’s definitely good business for taxi drivers.

Our cruise itinerary gave us two whole days plus day-stops at the Bahamas; Ocho Rios, Jamaica; Georgetown, Grand Cayman; and Mahogany Bay, Roatan (an island off Honduras). On Sunday morning the 16th, we docked at Fort Lauderdale and flew home to the snowy but less-sweaty climate of home. In a week (Christmas Day), we fly off to Nancy’s family homestead in Colorado for the 6 days of Christmas.

Half Moon Cay, Bahamas

In the Bahamas, our first stop, we took tenders ashore to Half Moon Cay Island, which is owned by Holland America. Tenders are shuttle boats the size of lifeboats that shuttle passengers back and forth to shore where docking is not possible. Our ship carried 6 of these tenders as lifeboats that do double duty. On the Island, we enjoyed a 2 hour

walking tour. Here are some pictures from the tour of Half Moon Cay Island in the Bahamas.



Re-roofing with green palm leaves

On the Half Moon Cay Island, walking tour took us through bushes and short palm trees with leaves like those shown above. The palm leaves are not only beautiful, but also functional. The above photo shows workers replacing a roof with palm leaves. It was only about 78 degrees but very humid so it was a relief to return to the ship soaking wet after a 2-hour walk in the sun. The Bahamas' were hard hit 6 weeks ago by Hurricane Sandy, but the debris had mostly been cleaned up on the island. However, few birds had returned as all of the fruits and berries had blown away. Our tour guide assured us that in time the berries and birds would return. She was a native from a nearby island, and one highlight of our walking tour was learning from her about each of the native plant species and what illnesses could be cured with each species. She especially

enjoyed telling us about which plants were aphrodisiacs and how they changed peoples' attitudes.

One stop on our walking tour was the manta ray area where people could swim with the manta rays. They love to be fed and touched by humans and they are perfectly safe unless you step on their tails, in which case they take you for a tail spin or more precisely, give you a major tail sting.

Cuba

No, we couldn't stop in Cuba, but on our first full day at sea, we followed the coast of Cuba for many hours, because we had to go around it to get to Jamaica. Our ship kept its distance of about 4-5 miles. If you are thinking of taking a western Caribbean cruise, wait a few years, because maybe Obama or someone like him will give Americans the freedom to go to Cuba legally.



Eastern Cuba from Ship at 18 Knots per Hour

Ocho Rios, Jamaica

A few years ago, we spent a few days in Jamaica, based in Montego Bay. This time, we spent a half day in Jamaica docked at Ocho Rios. Mostly, we just explored the town. As you can see by the photos on the next page, our cameras captured some of the local

lifestyles. Even though the main industry seems to be catering to the interests of cruise passengers, the foreigners made up only a small fraction of the town's population.



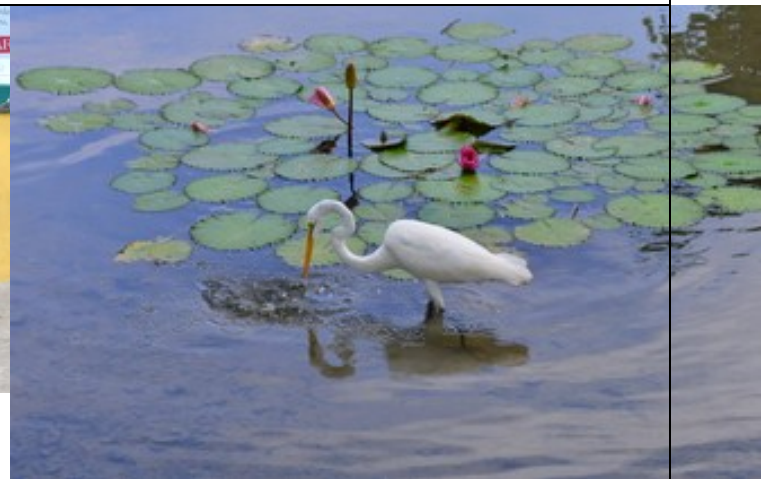
Ocho Rios Town Fishermen Docking



Community Bath and Laundry Area in Jamaica



Ocho Rios Reggae Band and Dancing



**Egret Fishing in Lotus Pond in Ocho Rios
14dec12**

We found a small, free city park with ponds harboring turtles, lotus flowers and a lone white egret. (See above photo of the egret.) Probably the pictures we captured of the fishing egret among the lotus blossoms were the best of the trip.

Georgetown, Grand Cayman Island

The next stop was at the Georgetown, the largest city in the Cayman Islands. Banks in this city are the most popular place to wire money by people and corporations that don't want to pay taxes and/or don't want anyone to know how much money they have. Thus, not surprisingly, it looked more like a Florida seacoast town than a Caribbean village. The city's main street follows the shoreline where the boats unload. On the ocean side are places to go snorkeling but on the other side are big shopping malls, big banks and 2 or 3 churches.

		
Ship Tender carrying 100 to Shore	National Museum	Huge Bank with Churches in Georgetown, Cayman
		
Nancy Posing with Coconuts on Georgetown Main Street	Typical Georgetown Architecture	Tarpon in downtown Georgetown Beach

The Cayman Islands, a nation of 50,000 people, has over 90,000 corporations registered in its capitol, Georgetown. The world's foremost tax haven has no tax, but because of recession fears, they now are debating the addition of a tax on only workers, but not corporations. Progress may be taking a step backwards.

A number of the NationCruise passengers are activists who have led protests and political movements. Several women from [CodePink](#), an activist group that struggles for reducing violence against women, organized a protest rally for Georgetown to bring attention to USA and Cayman Island policies that allow corporations to share an office in Georgetown for their pretend corporate headquarters, which allows the corporation to avoid huge income tax obligations. These tax policies allow companies to evade over \$200 billion dollars annually in corporate tax obligations.

The local police and TV journalists seemed a bit shocked as apparently this was the first protest rally in the Cayman Islands. Furthermore, the average age of the protesters was probably 70 years and each of nearly 100 people wore light-brown "Nation" t-shirts." The protestors spent most of their time singing and chanting in front of the Uglands House, which is a front for 18,000 corporations, giving them a few feet of space and a registered address for their corporate or regional headquarters. It was all very peaceful and more fun than going on a sightseeing tour. I went along as a photographer and took the pictures on the next page. You can see more of my pictures from the protest on my Flickr site at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ron-anderson/>
 Many more photos can be found on:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/codepinkalert/sets/72157632245777771/detail/?page=2>

(If you want an easy link to these sites, let me know and I'll send you an electronic document of this story with the links embedded.)

Here is a link to a video of the picketing event too:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnwRodMiBwA>



Roatan Island, Honduras

The last stop before returning to Florida was at an island of Honduras called Roatan. On the island, we took a 4-hour tour that included a Butterfly Garden with many interesting birds and the Carambola Botanical Garden. The latter was unusual because the trees were unusual and huge. Many of the trees were upwards of 200 feet, including Mahogany trees, for which Honduras cuts the most beautiful mahogany wood in the world. Some were chocolate trees (see next page for photos); others were gigantic Norfolk Pines; and many were banana trees. At the end of the tour, the guide cut us fresh, ripe bananas, papaya, and pineapple to sample.

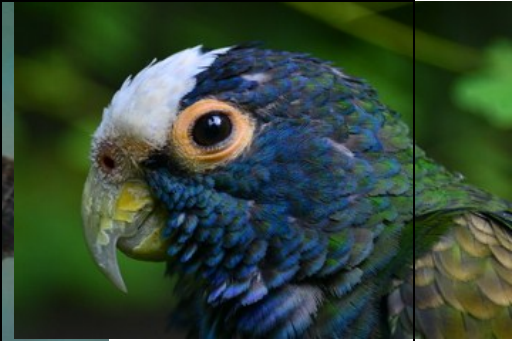
The native Hondurans live without many material resources. Their dwellings and infrastructure are more like nearby Haiti than the Cayman Islands.



Native Dancers - West End - Roatan Island Honduras



Helicopter Butterfly in Roatan



Blue Headed Parrot - Roatan Butterfly Garden - Roatan Island Honduras



Mahogany Forest in Honduras



Gecko Lizard on Red Ti Plant



Heliconia flowers in Roatan Butterfly Garden -



Chocolate Bearing Tree



Scarlett McCaw in Roatan Butterfly Garden



Two McCaws Paired in Later Life

The Nation Cruise Program and People

[The Nation](#) is the oldest continuously-published weekly magazine in the United States have been launched long before the Civil War. Its print circulation is about 150,000 and its online circulation is growing fast. A Google search yields about a half billion references to TheNation.Com on the web. The Nation pays its writers in order to ensure up-to-date, high quality writing and analysis, and most of the speakers on the cruise were writers for the magazine. Because of these costs, the magazine has to raise quite a bit of money to survive. One means of financing is a club called the Nation Builders who donate to the Nation and in return they get to participate in the online forums and other networking functions associated with the magazines. It was impressive to discover a number of people on the cruise that had been on the annual cruise every year for the past 15 years.

During the cruise, the Nation held nine sessions, plus the Joan Baez concert. Almost all the sessions had a panel of 4-5 presenters but two sessions were interviews of a single individual. All of the sessions allowed at least half the time for questions from the audience, which contributed to a sense of community.

About one fifth (450) of the passengers on board came for the activities of the Nation Cruise group-tour, the rest were mostly just ordinary cruisers, in the 70-90 age bracket, overweight, bored and from the USA. Actually, the average person on the Nation Cruise group appeared to be about 70 or older, but not overweight and definitely not bored. They randomly assigned us to dinner tables each night, so we got to meet a lot of interesting people that way.

The serious part of the [Nation Cruise](#) was not as serious as you might think. Almost all were excellent speakers and fast thinkers with a clever sense of humor. The audience was very appreciative: they laughed hard at the jokes and they clapped hard when a speaker made a good point that agreed with their own. The hot issues included such issues as how to organize to get Obama's attention in his last term, how to fix foreign and domestic policy, and how to avert the damage from global warming. There were about 13 speakers and below are pictures of most of them. All of the speakers were accomplished journalists and authors of anywhere from one to 15 books each. Several regularly appear on television and radio as experts. Three are currently professors. Two of the speakers, Jodie Evans and Medea Benjamin, founded CodePink, an activist organization to promote an end to violence against women. CodePink, however, has broadened its protest organizing to include other causes, partly because several of the key people are such experienced leaders, and the group continues to gain visibility and impact.

				
Katrina vanden Heuvel, The Publisher, Editor, & Moderator	John Nichols, Author, Speaker, Blogger	Francis Fox Piven, Celebrity sociologist	Chris Hayes, MSNBC Talk Show Host, & Author	Jodie Evans, CodePink Founder and Political Operative
				
Dave Zirin	Eric Altman	Gary Younge	Richard Kim	Medea Benjamin

The first two Nation sessions of the cruise were on the topics of USA foreign and domestic policy. The panelists eloquently and with fervor proposed the following kinds of political changes for America:

1. Global peace and international solidarity (e.g., International Solidarity Movement)
2. Saving the planet from destruction due to global warming (e.g., 360.org)
3. Use force as only a last resort and reduce military spending (e.g., Veterans for Peace, The Peace Alliance)
4. Stop going to war over anything but human rights (e.g., WeAreChange.org and Spiritual Progressives)
5. Resurrect diplomacy at all levels (e.g., Friends for a Non-Violent World)
6. Give up on blind nationalism and exceptionalism (e.g., Global citizens movement)
7. Restore democracy and block procedures that inhibit voting (e.g., FairVote)
8. Seriously regulate money, lobbying, and corporatist advantage out of politics (e.g., Citizens for Corporate Redesign - C4CR.org)
9. Squeeze lies and propaganda out of the media (e.g., FreePress)
10. Effectively end rape and violence toward women (e.g., One Billion Rising)
11. Reduce hatred and end unfair discrimination based on race, religion, and any other ascribed trait (e.g., Charter for Compassion)
12. Value altruistic behavior at least equally with trade or market behavior (e.g., Caring across Generations)
13. Mechanisms for replacing within-community distrust with trust, and aggression with solidarity (e.g., Jobs with Justice, Neighbors for Peace)

The specific social action groups or movements within parentheses above were not discussed at the beginning of the week, but they were brought into the discussions toward the end of the week. The initial session left me feeling depressed about the potential for human progress in general, but by the end of the week, I had more of a feeling of hope. At first, it seemed like the world nations, led by the United States, were going to fall over a political cliff together. But as the speakers talked about the social movements going on at the grass roots level in the United States and around the globe, we were left with a feeling that the generations of our children and grandchildren will not necessarily self-destruct. Of course, this does not mean that the USA will not fall over the fiscal cliff in the coming week.

To some extent, the evolution of my perspective last week came from a growing sense of coherence and solidarity in the goals and objectives of those leading the principal social and political movements. Also, it became clearer that they were addressing the needs of every human being, not just the American middle class.

Another worry I have about social political action generally is that it may easily become consumed with short term rather than long term goals. We need to ask of each project is whether or not we will know what to do next, once we finish the current project. We need to ask: Will we still be hurting people? Will we feel lost? Will it be easier for the next generation to avoid self-destructive policies?

I see better now that change in America toward social justice and human rights will be short-lived unless we change hearts as well as minds, and unless we change social institutions as well as political ones. Unless we adopt a vision and ethic of caring for all others, our agenda will be swamped by those that only care about their own selfish interests.

When history looks back on our era, I predict it will probably see America's current, catatonic stalemate as a morality play between those who claim moral superiority because they seek tradition, order and purity, versus those who claim moral superiority because they seek social justice, concern and caring. Ironically, it is the same morality play going on in the middle-eastern Islamic countries. The ancient Greeks and the Book of Revelation described the end of time as a "Battle of Armageddon." Mistakenly, some Christians have presumed it would happen in the "Holy Land." If it happens, it could be anywhere or everywhere.

Where are the leaders that will carry the moral ethic of Martin Luther King, the forgiveness ethic of Nelson Mandela, and the caregiving ethic of women like Pema Chodron or Mother Teresa? Without them, the morality of Sara Palin and Michele Bachmann will shape the short-term future.

My vague, evolving thoughts on these subjects were illuminated this week by my discovery of a book entitled [The Compassionate Rebel Revolution: Ordinary People Changing the World](#). It was published here in Minneapolis in 2011, under my radar until

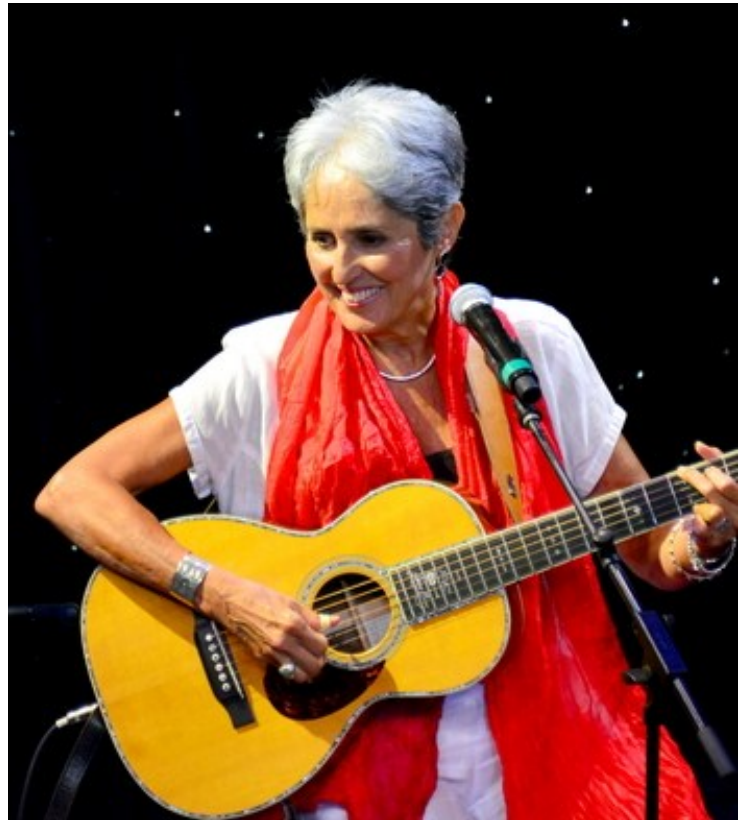
now. The book is a collection of about 50 stories of ordinary individuals whose actions change the world. Many, but not all, are linked to community and national organizations that promote change in compassionate directions. It is slow reading, but I strongly recommend the book.

An old man that I admire told me recently that one's individual contributions to the world add up to the equivalent of spitting in the ocean. I doubt that there is much truth in this metaphor but if so, the quality of the organic matter from our poetic saliva could fertilize the future to blossom with even more beauty than we now envision.

Joan Baez

The most notable event of the Nation Cruise was the 90 minute musical performance by the famous Joan Baez. When I was age 25 at Stanford, she was already famous on campus because she lived in the area and had a relationship with David Harris, then Student Body President and civil rights protester. They married in 1968 for 5 years and had a son Gabriel Harris, who sometimes tours with her.

In her early 70s, she is still vibrant and a gifted musician. Earlier in the week, in one of the talk sessions, she was interviewed for an hour. Both events made the cruise very special. At the age of 70, she rarely gives concerts and said she will discontinue altogether in a few years. She talked about spending recent years re-connecting with her son and other family members. Her recent songs are much more about reflection than struggle. She remains a great performer, connecting so easily with her audience.



Cruise Lifestyles

The biggest shock to us was adjusting to a minimal-Internet lifestyle where using the Internet for anything (texts, web searches, or email) cost about 50 cents per minute and was very slow because it has to send and receive from a satellite. Both Nancy and I typically depend on high speed Internet all day long for retrieving information and communicating via email or text. We have gotten into a habit of retrieving answers to just about any question from the web within 4-5 seconds. Perhaps it is character-strengthening to learn to go without feeding information into our data-hungry minds. But after two days, we were already looking forward to returning home to the land of snow and high-speed Internet.

Another trauma of cruises is that it is nearly impossible not to feel like a pampered pig and to gain weight. I gained 5 pounds on this cruise and have made a vow that if I take another cruise, I will either not order any food for dinner or leave 90% of it on my plate.

This was our third cruise and all have been theme cruises. This coming summer's 7-day cruise to Alaska (August 17 from Seattle) will be our first non-theme cruise, unless you consider the Kehmeier family a theme. It will be a family reunion, and gives us something new to which to look forward.

Ron

PS: Lest you think I take life too seriously, please watch this and laugh to your heart's content. If it were not for the viral popularity of the Gangnam dance, you would conclude that I should have taken dance lessons as a kid:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lpdK25miR0&feature=youtu.be>