



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Frances Moore Lappé / Institute for Food and Development Policy (USA)

(1987)

...for revealing the political and economic causes of world hunger and how citizens can help to remedy them.



Photo: Wolfgang Schmidt

Frances Moore Lappé was born in 1944 and came to public notice in 1971 with the publication by Ballantine Books of her *Diet for Small Planet*, which has sold three million copies and been translated into French, German, Swedish, Japanese and Spanish.

In 1975 Lappé and Joseph Collins founded the Institute for Food and Development Policy, which became known as Food First after the first book it published, entitled *Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity*. The Institute, a non-governmental public education and research and documentation centre, is internationally recognised for addressing the political and economic roots of world hunger and demonstrating how ordinary citizens can effectively help to end hunger. The book *Food First*, co-authored by Lappé and Collins, demonstrated that world hunger had political and economical causes, not due either to food scarcity or over-population. This theme was reinforced in their next book, *World Hunger: Twelve Myths* (1986).

Food First publicises lessons, both positive and negative, that increase understanding of how grassroots and non-governmental strategies can allow the poor to transform their lives through greater democratic control. To this end, Food First and Lappé have conducted in-depth investigations of food issues in Cuba, the Philippines, Mozambique, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Nicaragua, Mexico (Chiapas) and India (Kerala).

To counter free-market myths, Food First published *Chile's Free Market Miracle: A Second Look*, by Joseph Collins and John Lear (1994). Like other of its studies, such as *Dark Victory: The United*

States, Structural Adjustment and Global Poverty (by Walden Bello) and *Breakfast of Biodiversity: The Truth about Rainforest Destruction* (by John Vandeneer and Ivette Perfecto, 1995), this book reveals the devastating impact of both world trade and international lending institutions in deepening poverty throughout much of the South.

Food First has also joined with other groups in advocating policy changes that would bring greater democratic control of food resources to the world's poor majority. Food First's books and reports are widely used by grassroots groups in both the North and the South, as well as in college classrooms, and cultural exchanges are organised - most recently between organic farmers and specialists in Cuba and the United States.

Throughout her work Lappé stressed that hunger is caused not by a scarcity of food but a scarcity of democracy. In 1990 she helped to bring that message home, co-founding with her husband, Paul Martin Du Bois, the Center for Living Democracy in Brattleboro, Vermont. Their 1994 book, *The Quickening of America: Rebuilding Our Nation, Remaking Our Lives* (Jossey-Bass) describes the work of citizens creating a 'living democracy' that engages ordinary citizens in decision making. Believing that society's problems can only be solved in such a living democracy, Lappé and Du Bois are creating a national centre through which citizens learn from each other's trials and triumphs.

Quotation

"No society has fulfilled its democratic promise if people go hungry... If some go without food they have surely been deprived of all power. The existence of hunger belies the existence of democracy."

Frances Moore Lappé

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