

ELEPHANT HATS MADE OUT OF CARDBOARD BOXES IN THE NAME OF TRADE JUSTICE HERE'S WHY HELEN IS NUTS ABOUT FAIRTRADE



Above: Educational outreach for Earth Day.
Organised by Abbots Mill Project
and Canterbury UNA

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Geography and International
Development | 2014

Info on Liberation:

www.chooseliberation.com

To buy nuts:

www.liberation.traidcraftshop.co.uk

Talk to Helen:

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**“WE ARE NOT CHANGING
THE WORLD OR SAVING
LIVES, BUT SIMPLY DOING
BUSINESS AS HONEST
PARTNERS.”**

HELEN LONG

Since leaving DEV last year, I have landed a job which combines my interests in trade justice and cardboard boxes. Currently beneath my desk, you will find a moderately ordered collection of these renewable resources which were previously banished to the recycling bin. Now, I add value by turning them into elephant hats.

I work as a campaigner at Liberation Foods CIC (Community Interest Company), a Fairtrade nut company based in London but owned by farming cooperatives around the world. Liberation produce flavoured nuts, fruit and nut mixes, and peanut butter. Farmers are paid a premium, which in Kerala they decided to spend on a ‘friendly, but elephant proof’ fence!

Part of my work is to send nut sample packs to activists in universities, local Fairtrade groups and shops. These are delivered in cardboard boxes which I then use to create animal hats, otherwise called ‘educational’ outreach.

I found this job, not through development websites, but by simply typing ‘part time Fairtrade job’ into a search engine. It was advertised on ‘Indeed’ as well as on the Liberation social media pages. I have since learnt the importance of following such feeds, and looking for jobs in unexpected places.

Not long ago, I didn’t expect to be doing a job that I liked. In my final year at DEV I struggled with health problems, sitting my exams late and writing an awful dissertation. Initially after university, I worked as a nursery assistant, the same job I had before I started studying. I now use this childcare experience for promotional activities. Compared to nursery work, being a ‘Campaigner’ is better paid and much less exhausting!

Whilst at UEA, I often wondered what the point was of writing all these essays, when only a handful of people would ever read them. Since then, I have found a practical use, and have published some articles on the internet; one of which I brought to my interview. Also at my interview, I demonstrated

my interest in nuts by saying that I had been selling homemade wild hazel milk, but had never made any money. Perhaps they valued my honesty. I have also used references from my degree to make a food supply quiz for a presentation, and to inform my answers to audience questions. The job advert stated that the company was looking for a person with an interest in researching the lives of small scale farmers in developing countries. I was able to say that I had spent three years doing just that.

I also talked about the skills I use in my other work at Skillnet Group CIC. Here, I applied for a job as a Supporter for people with Autistic Spectrum Conditions, for which I wasn’t really qualified. However, I was offered an internship to acquire experience. This led to hearing about an internal vacancy for getting an allotment group up and running. I helped promote the group, fundraise and organise community tree planting and maintenance events. At one event, we mulched the trees with the use of cardboard; its potential is manifold. Now, as well as being a Campaigner at Liberation Foods, I have taken over supporting the allotment group as Project Lead. I was first invited to work for Skillnet in 2010, when I met them through Greenpeace and revealed that I’m vegan. Therefore, contrary to my A Level Economics teacher’s advice, political activism and ‘hippyness’ turned out to be good career moves...

In my view, Fairtrade, DEV, and Skillnet Group all have something in common. Skillnet Group consists of ‘people with and without learning difficulties working together to achieve equality.’ We promote human rights by running social enterprises in a ‘co-produced’ or democratic way. In DEV, one similar message I took away was to not interfere with people’s lives and patronise them, but to learn trust. Again, in Fairtrade we are not changing the world or saving lives, but simply doing business as honest partners.