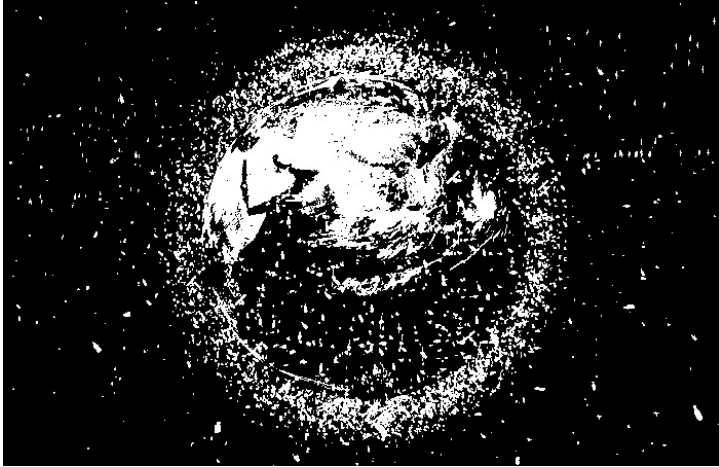


*AMERICA IS
DEAD.*

*LONG LIVE
AMERICA.*

*Beyond Comfort, Pushing
Into the Future*

By Derek Joe Tennant



DEBRIS THAT WE WILL LEAVE BEHIND, NO MATTER
WHAT HAPPENS IN AMERICA

In hopes of a brighter
future, and a

Collapse

that is better than what we
have today

for my granddaughters,

Panjalat in Thailand,

Dana in America

This book is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 license. That means you are free:

- to Share -- to copy, distribute and transmit the work, and
- to Remix -- to adapt the work

Under these conditions:

- Attribution. You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- Noncommercial. You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
- Share Alike. If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same or similar license to this one.
- If you reuse or distribute, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work. The best way to do this is with this link:

<http://www.derekjoetennant.net/copyleft>

Note: Any of the above conditions can be waived if you get my permission, through the above website

More info about this license is available here:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

As you may deduce from the above, my joy derives from the act of creation. I write to inspire you, to move your heart, and hopefully to amuse you all the while. We live in a sea of energy and consciousness. This energy is like water: its best work is when it is moving, vibrant and cleansing, alive with possibility. When it is trapped, captured, unable to flow it becomes stagnant and even toxic, a breeding site for dis-ease. I best serve when I allow energy to flow through me, when I am but a channel for consciousness to evolve. Moving my energy into the Universe allows room for energy to flow into me, nourishing and supporting me.

I hope you are grateful for what I have created, that it has moved you in some way. You can thank me for my work in several ways:

- bringing it into the awareness of others spreads the energy
- using any inspiration to take your own action or to embellish this work before passing it along feeds the flow
- or if you are so moved, showing your appreciation by passing some of your energy in the form of money back to me via my website also continues the flow that nourishes everyone.

I welcome your comments and/or questions.
Contact me at derek@derekjoetennant.net

<i>AMERICA IS DEAD.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>LONG LIVE AMERICA.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<u><i>Foreword.....</i></u>	<u><i>9</i></u>
<u><i>Before We Look At Solutions</i></u>	<u><i>.....14</i></u>
<u><i>That Nasty Word Collapse.....</i></u>	<u><i>19</i></u>
<u><i>Change.....</i></u>	<u><i>29</i></u>
<u><i>Radical Change.....</i></u>	<u><i>49</i></u>
<u><i>Your Money or Your Life..</i></u>	<u><i>54</i></u>
<u><i>The Idea of a ‘Commons’.....</i></u>	<u><i>54</i></u>
<u><i>Quantitative Easing.....</i></u>	<u><i>80</i></u>
<u><i>Money As Debt.....</i></u>	<u><i>98</i></u>
<u><i>It’s the Economy, Not Peak Oil.....</i></u>	<u><i>139</i></u>
<u><i>Local Economy.....</i></u>	<u><i>154</i></u>
<u><i>True Cost Pricing.....</i></u>	<u><i>165</i></u>
<u><i>Paying The Taxman.....</i></u>	<u><i>174</i></u>
<u><i>Land Reform.....</i></u>	<u><i>182</i></u>
<u><i>Why Social Justice?.....</i></u>	<u><i>187</i></u>
<u><i>5 Stages of Racism: Where Are We?.....</i></u>	<u><i>195</i></u>
<u><i>What Is Social Justice?.....</i></u>	<u><i>216</i></u>

.....	225
<u>Social Justice and Me.....</u>	<u>226</u>
<u>Work.....</u>	<u>249</u>
<u>Consumer.....</u>	<u>264</u>
<u>Food.....</u>	<u>288</u>
<u>Gender.....</u>	<u>299</u>
<u>Injustice and Racism in Your Neighborhood, AKA “The Justice System”</u>	<u>315</u>
<u>Military.....</u>	<u>325</u>
<u>A Just Politics.....</u>	<u>351</u>
<u>Ecology.....</u>	<u>357</u>
<u>Protecting the Future of Food.....</u>	<u>364</u>
<u><i>Does Spirituality Hold the Key?.....</i></u>	<u>370</u>
<u>What Einstein Points To.....</u>	<u>370</u>
<u>A New Story.....</u>	<u>377</u>
<u>A New Awareness.....</u>	<u>382</u>
<u>A Deep Hunger.....</u>	<u>388</u>
<u>Bringing Spirituality to Life.....</u>	<u>391</u>
<u>Inner Peace.....</u>	<u>396</u>
<u>Just One Example.....</u>	<u>407</u>
<u><i>Short Tips.....</i></u>	<u>409</u>

***Speak Freely*.....439**
Appendix A.....444

Foreword

Allow me, please, to say a few words about the three ‘Revs’: Revel, Revise and Revolt. There are people in America today, who don’t see any problems. In other words, they *revel* in what society has created. They don’t see greed as a problem; they are content and see only more of the same, just bigger and brighter, as they look into the future. They are not reading this book.

Next, there are many, the majority in fact, who feel that we can just *revise* our way of life. They believe that there are problems that need to be addressed, but they still believe in the fundamental and foundational ideas that underlie our post-modern world. We’ll simply pass tougher regulations, we’ll develop new techniques to find more oil, we’ll use high-tech methods to take carbon out of the atmosphere, we’ll genetically engineer wheat and corn that can grow *anywhere and in any climate* maybe even without needing water, we’ll find ways to seed clouds and stop hurricanes in their tracks, and after all, what’s another 36 inches of ocean really mean to me if I live in Denver? I sincerely hope, if this is your view, that you will take a deep breath and read this book. I will challenge you to question many of the underpinnings of American society. I will offer ideas that are supportive of change

that will be meaningful, but it is really my hope to get you talking; talking with your mate, with your friends and family, even talking with strangers in grocery stores and malls and at work, about how we will change the future, or cope with what the future does to change us.

Lastly, there is *revolt*. A few people fear that there is no way to bandage and tape the broken parts of this paradigm and make it into a sustainable, life-affirming culture. We vacillate between inner work: trying to change our consciousness and to channel some great idea that will revolutionize society and empower every being to make a difference (or at least to let go of our attachment to the outcome so we are no longer disappointed or angry), and outer work: which usually means getting our own life together (recycling as much as we can) and to make all the changes the system allows *short of changing the system*. We, too, are failing to achieve our goals, as long as we are wedded to the current system. Can we embrace radical change, in order to change the culture in radical ways? I hope to give those of you who say, “YES!” the information you need when discussing more radical and paradigm-busting change with your cohorts and potential converts, and added motivation to question the very system that continues to drive our societal car towards the cliff of extinction.

The abuser always relies on the victim believing that there is no alternative; things just have to be *this* way. That this is *not* true becomes more apparent every day, if you only look. Please check out the many alternatives that cover the ground around our feet.

As I write this book in 2011, we are seeing the results, some successful and some not, of what has been termed the *Arab Spring*. People, primarily in North Africa, but also around the world, are rising up against the current dominant paradigm of oil and big business and eternal growth. In no case was it easy for people to challenge authority; even the youngsters, teens and twenty-somethings that often led the charge, were well aware of how ruthless the existing authorities could be. Where do these people get the strength to stand in the streets, full of fear and threatened with death? It arises from composting the oppression that has filled their lives, from weighing the consequences of non-action and finding action preferable, and from wanting a better life for their child so desperately that they will *risk everything* to create a miracle.

Their circumstances may be poor in relation to our current American standard of living, yet people we would label “poor” are often, in fact usually, some of the most resilient, generous people you can meet. They are whole and complete, and to label them poor is to denigrate and victimize and

stereotype. They deal with the ebb and flow of poverty and their lack of resources with great courage and resolve. Likewise, to label someone “rich” brings its own stereotypes: they are whole also, and suffer addiction, abuse, abandonment, and relational dysfunction. They deal with the ebb and flow and even tyranny of the resources in their life, too. More appropriate would be to call someone “resource-poor” or “resource-rich”, because after all, it is what we do as we live within our circumstances that is most important, not the circumstances themselves.

Transformation is always happening. We constantly hospice the death of our old way of life, its structures and systems and perspectives, and midwife the birth of its replacement. *America is Dead, Long Live America* looks at the economic issues that plague the American Dream with an eye towards fashioning its replacement. Yes, the Dream is dying, but its death will not leave a vacuum: those who remain will craft a new Dream. It is becoming very clear that the replacement will be much more centered on community and neighborhood, rather than global excess. We will learn to share, something we never really understood during the post-World War II boom times. We will begin to recognize that all members of the human family deserve our respect and our attention. We will learn to live together, or we will not live.

America, at least the mindset that lives the American Dream of a nuclear family in a house with a white picket fence, is dying. But America will be reborn as a new community. The only question to be answered is what your new neighborhood will look like. What shape will the new America take? We each have the chance to shape our future together, if we begin to have the serious, deep, and truthful conversations about what we desire in an ideal society; both with our neighbors and with ourselves.

What truly matters, at the end of our lives, is the relationships we have built, the love we have shared, the compassion we have offered ourselves as well as others. Just as our economy, our ecology, and our politics are evolving, so does our spirituality. Can we come together, sharing what we have learned during our lives, and forge a just and sane society? What exactly does that look like, and what are the steps to get there? The conversation is only beginning. Please join in!

Before We Look At Solutions

“We could ease into energy descent while holding ferociously to justice, compassion, and the concept of universal human rights. We could. But I see no evidence that we—global or local we—are preparing for that. Instead, industrial civilizations are going to clutch entitlement with one hand and denial with the other. Prove me wrong. Please, show me the evidence, because I am not looking forward to the next fifty years. Without an unassailable commitment to justice and democracy, the contraction of both population and consumption promises to be heartless as well as relentless.”

Lierre Keith, writing in “*The Vegetarian Myth*”

We are alive at a unique time in human history. We face numerous, potentially catastrophic, global problems. You can name them as easily as I: climate change, peak oil, the global financial crisis, illegal immigration/human trafficking, endless war/terror, pollution, species extinction; and you’ve probably thought of a few I haven’t included here. All arise from the notion that

we are each individuals, separate and distinct from others and from Nature. This leads us to judge, to denigrate, and to dominate all life. Today, mankind has issues that affect everyone, and every life form, while at the same time having the wherewithal to reach around the globe in search of solutions. It is, as is often quoted, “The best of times and the worst of times”. For the first time, Mankind can choose between unconsciously causing our own extinction, or consciously affecting our own evolution, as a species and as a culture.

All life on Earth today is the result of 13.7 billion years of change, of growth and of expansion. If not for the Big Bang and the death of stars billions of years before the birth of our own Sun, the fundamental components of Earth’s chemistry: oxygen, carbon, and hydrogen, would not exist. We are literally made from the dust of stars, remnants of mighty explosions that peppered the Universe with the building blocks of life. The salmon that jump the fish ladders around dams to return to their spawning grounds, the flowers blooming in your backyard garden, your precious grandchild resting quietly on your lap after Thanksgiving dinner, all are the product of eons of evolution. Yet never before, has any being been as aware of their own path or destiny, of their own rapidly approaching extinction, as we are today.

Our own human path to this moment in time is still hotly debated. Yet some things are clear: man survived by being able to adapt to changing conditions, and by seeding ever-increasing numbers of environments with people who would learn new ways to live. These techniques of resiliency: maintaining a modular style of clans and tribes, each independent of the others until famine or drought forced a migration into another's territory; using diversity to encourage and facilitate genetic modifications that enabled survival under extreme conditions; and using creativity to find effective solutions to never-before-seen problems; combined to ensure that our species would weather environmental changes that pushed many others to extinction. We thrive in the balmy centuries, and even manage to live well under Ice Age conditions that can only be described as brutal.

But today, we have so embraced the idea that we live within a global village that we are rapidly losing the qualities that enabled our survival. We are putting all of our eggs in one basket, the basket of modern technology. That basket is made from oil, with a smattering of other common and uncommon minerals thrown in as if for seasoning. Because oil offers such incredible power, we have used it to claw our way to the top of a domination pyramid, controlling other people, tribes, nations and even the natural

world, always seeking more resources. Our technology offers such hope of carefree living that billions of people around the globe aspire to partake in the modern dream we now share in America. Yet reality shows us that this materialistic path does not lead to happiness, and many, many signs scream at us that a finite world cannot provide an infinite amount of resources for an infinite number of people to exploit. We lose the diversity that helped us survive change as we narrow the acceptable behaviors, races, and beliefs we will tolerate in our techno future, as we blend cultures together into a one-flavor world, and as we base every aspect of our life on oil that will soon stop being cheap and easily obtained. Oil is in the plastic that makes the products we buy disposable. It's in the food we eat, as fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides, and in the transportation that brings tomatoes to your supermarket shelves in January, when it is -10° outside. Of course, it goes without saying that it is in our cars, and even if you buy one of those new all-electric cars, if you plug it into an outlet to recharge, you are probably tapping into another fossil fuel, coal, to enable tomorrow's driving. It is in our medicines, our clothes, and because of the internal combustion engine, it is in our air and water.

We have become so dependent on oil to fuel our lifestyle, that techniques of living and adapting that had been passed down from generation to generation for thousands

of years are being forgotten. I am part of the tail end of the Baby Boomer generation, and my grandparents grew into adulthood without electricity in their home. It seems like we've had electricity *forever*, doesn't it? They knew not to throw *anything* away; once you'd managed to trade or pay for something, even if it broke, it could be mended or modified, or traded for something else. They knew how to garden, to store what came out of their garden, and to gift their abundance to neighbors. They knew they could depend on neighbors when things went badly, and there were few times when they were happier than when they were at a barn raising, or a wedding, or even just a community potluck and dance on a warm Saturday evening. They knew how to turn a few chickens into enough eggs for sale, and could do the same with a cow's meat, milk and cheese. They knew about the importance of crop rotation, and coordinated with neighbors so that someone was always growing corn while another grew peas and beans, and a third those oh-so-delicious tomatoes, for canning or just plain snacking, sun-warmed and right off the vine. They learned from their family, their neighbors, and sometimes from a master craftsman. They learned many skills that would help the family, and the village, survive unexpected changes in the weather. They lived with death at every moment, and they were in touch with the natural turnings of the

seasons and of Nature's ways. They knew they had a place in the grand scheme of things, and they knew that those with the hubris to think they were at the top of the food chain would always fall farther and harder than those who didn't.

That Nasty Word Collapse

Thinking that a collapse of Western Civilization is possible is anathema to many. We can't imagine a world radically different from today, and we fear that loss of the fundamental building block of modern industrial society, cheap oil, leads only to anarchy and death. In a speech delivered 22 May 2011, the author and activist Michael Ruppert¹ gave a concise diagnosis of why some people refuse to question our current societal model. In an excerpt from that speech he describes the pervasive belief in the "sacred, state religion of Petroleum Man":

“Instead of criticizing ourselves for our faults and our dependence we salute ourselves for how much distance we have created between ourselves and the beast of infinite growth, and from the certain death offered us by a useless religion that

¹ Visit his primary website at <http://www.collapsenet.com>

now stands exposed as a complete fraud. Our official religion asks us to believe and to repeat as catechism, to stake lives, our childrens' lives, and the life of everything on this planet, [on the idea] that infinite growth is possible. It asks you NOT to comprehend what it means when the International Energy Agency tells us that instead of 64 million barrels of conventional oil, what we consume today, we will have only 16 million barrels available by the year 2035. It asks you to believe that all the paper debt now strangling the governments of Petroleum Man can be repaid through more growth, more pollution, and more consumption. Our state religion, our official religion asks you to believe that home values will rise again. Our state religion asks you to believe that you will be able to repay your debts. Our sacred religion of Petroleum Man asks you to consume more while you find yourself spending what little you have to fill your gas tanks and to put food on your table. It asks you to believe that genetically modified crops are good for you and your livestock. It asks you to believe that meat from genetically modified animals and clones is healthy. Our religion, our old religion, asks you to

believe that fracking² of shale gas will solve all of our energy needs and provide us with cheap, clean energy. It asks you to believe that there has been no permanent damage to the Gulf of Mexico from Deepwater Horizon. It asks you to believe that plants, animals and humans aren't sickened and dying all over the Gulf. I'm still mad about that. It asks you to believe that seafood from the Gulf is safe. Our religion asks you not to see, the religion of Petroleum Man, not post-Petroleum Man, asks you to see that essential services, like emergency medical response, police and fire, are disappearing in a sea of budget cuts even as crime is rising and civil unrest becomes a global event. The religion of Petroleum Man asks you not to see that our infrastructure is failing or that there are 1500 water main breaks *a day* in this country, or that whole neighborhoods are being incinerated as natural gas pipes wear out and are not being replaced. The religion of Petroleum Man asks you to see that street lights and telephone wires and power cables are being scavenged, ripped out and stolen all over the country and from the world at large for the copper value in them. It asks you not to see that pension funds both

² *fracking* will be explained later in this book

public and private are being looted as governments rush to find the cash to cover previous crimes³ and make the minimum monthly payments on their unrepayable and criminal debts. The religion of Petroleum Man asks you to believe that nuclear power is safe. The religion of Petroleum Man asks you to believe that nuclear containment vessels cannot possibly be compromised⁴. It asks you to pretend

³ This refers to the many government pension funds that have not been actually funded. As budgets tightened, some government bodies agreed to contracts with their workers requiring these contributions, but they never placed the funds into the pension accounts, using the money to fund other government programs instead. How is that not fraud or malfeasance? There is also a trend at the national level to lower Social Security taxes required to be paid in, in order to stimulate the economy through greater discretionary income for consumers, regardless of the future shortfall in income. Congress also “borrows” from private retirement accounts in an accounting trick to avoid spending more in tax money than allowed under the debt cap. No plan is in place to repay the funds, and avoiding the use of borrowing to fund the government is the whole point of the debt cap.

⁴ Unbelievably, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission postulates that there will never be a breach of containment in any U.S. reactor for purposes of designing and approving evacuation plans and environmental impact reports prior to the construction or re-licensing of nuclear power plants. Fukushima Daiichi should be a wake up call to us all: at least three of the six reactors on site breached their containment, as of this writing.

that Japan is not mortally wounded by a still-worsening nuclear holocaust, many, many times greater and more deadly than Chernobyl. It asks you to believe that millions of Japanese are not already condemned to death. It asks you to believe that the globalized economy can and will function normally without the vital, dying organ of Japan. The religion of Petroleum Man and infinite growth asks you to believe that massive climate collapse and change is not occurring. The official religion asks that you not see all the earthquakes, wildfires, floods, droughts and rising sea levels that are redecorating and reclothing our Mother Earth right in front of our eyes. It asks you NOT to see that as reported in USA Today on May 16th 2011 the USA has been hit with 5 weather disasters costing more than \$1 billion each in 2011 setting a modern record for the most high-cost weather events so early in the year. The religion of Petroleum Man and infinite growth asks you to believe that there are no droughts where once there was sufficient rainfall. It asks you to believe that there are no floods in regions where rain was once scarce. The official religion of Petroleum Man asks you NOT to see that the last engine holding up a dying global

economy, China, is now experiencing widespread water and power shortages while its hungry people are forced to violent civil unrest and even suicides from factory roofs and on factory floors to escape the living hell that infinite growth has made for them. The official religion of infinite growth asks you not to appreciate what even Fox News has told us, that it's (quote) so bad that even Chinese central planners must be having sleepless nights in Beijing worrying if the lights are about to go out and the factories will stop pumping out goods (unquote). It asks you not to see that the European Union monetary steam is collapsing and that nationalism and ethnocentrism, racism and bigotry is growing stronger and ever more visible even as we speak. It asks you to believe that a sixth mass extinction event is not taking place with Mother Earth losing thousands of species every year. The official religion, the state religion of infinite growth, asks you to believe that there are more resources and unpolluted land and water to destroy and exploit in order to support your needs. It demands that you not see the one billion people, one in every seven of us on this planet, who are starving to death RIGHT NOW, today. The official

religion of Petroleum Man asks you not to see that major blackouts are striking cities and increasing in both severity and duration. It asks you not to see the streetlights of industrial civilization going out all over the world, as energy prices demand cutbacks and tax revenues collapse. The official religion of infinite growth asks you not to acknowledge that private and public pension funds are being looted from Ireland to Indiana. It asks that you not see that production is falling in every area in every industrialized country and that growth is dead. The official religion of infinite growth requires that you be in constant fear of losing your job, if you have one, and that the price for keeping your job is public affirmation of the official religion. It demands that you not see that food prices are skyrocketing worldwide and that, where as for most of us they are a painful inconvenience, elsewhere they are forcing millions of desperately hungry people into the streets. It demands that you NOT recognize that the church of infinite growth is wasting the last of the most precious resources we have, especially oil and water, trying to resuscitate the beast it serves at this direct cost: the murder of innocent life, and Spirit forbid, of

all life. Above all else, the official religion of Petroleum Man demands that you never, ever, see or acknowledge all of these things at the same time and in the same place. Finally, to hold everything together, the official religion of Petroleum Man demands that you believe and act as if all governments and banks have a clear understanding of these crises and that they are best equipped to respond to and repair them.

“The consciousness of post-Petroleum Man originates from a fundamental place of balance with and respect for everything in and on our Mother, from a place of love, rather than fear. The consciousness of post-Petroleum Man knows before thought that our infantile belief that we can plunder to the farthest corners of the globe in pursuit of increasingly hollow gratification is murderous, suicidal, and evil. The only thing that can allow physical humans to survive is a return to life by a sacred code of conduct, without sacrificing the wisdom we have so dearly paid for with this brief and passing era known as “human industrial civilization”. What our new species will add to the knowing of the ancients is our understanding that whatever technology we can preserve will have

value ONLY if it enriches the lives and spirits of all things together and equally.”

The scenario as laid out so concisely by Mr. Ruppert is usually seen as having one of four probable outcomes:

- 1) *Last man standing*; the common assumption, the default mode of thinking by many people. This outcome has Man fighting each other over the last bit of oil; destroying it, and each other, in the process.
- 2) *Power down*; a ‘green’ perspective when we scale back, diminish our collective use of fossil fuel, reduce our drain on Earth’s resources until we return to a sustainable paradigm. Its key word is *cooperative*. It fights the belief that we *deserve* more. It is primarily a mass consciousness shift.
- 3) *Delusion/denial*; also a very popular view. Here we substitute vegetable oil for petroleum, increase our use of coal for generating power, and make or grow synthetic fuels for our cars. Exotic substitutes are dreamed of, such as methane hydrates. There is a belief that technology will ride to our rescue, we can geo-engineer the planet to ameliorate climate change. The problem is, few of these solutions may actually work, or they require

time and trillions of dollars of investment to replace oil, dollars we don't have available to spend anymore. They let us individually off the hook, as we don't need to change our lifestyle: science will fix everything.

- 4) *Lifeboat*; a return to local communities that are relatively self-sufficient. Here we salvage as much of the knowledge as we can, but return to the land, farm locally, lower the level and impact of our technology, and find ways to access information that doesn't require power, paper or computers, such as by conversing with one another. We become independent of oil and slow down our lives considerably, recognizing the beauty of relationship rather than consumption, and find our joy in working to help each other, not just our selves.

America is Dead asks that you approach our global difficulties with an understanding that collapse does not have to be the end of the world, just the end of the world as we know it *today*. There are alternatives, ways of being and of doing that support the Earth and other humans without depending upon domination and exploitation. But before we look at some of these ways, let's examine a

huge stumbling block to evolving our consciousness, our fear of change.

Change

Addressing the issues that face us requires overcoming roadblocks inherent in our modern nature: denial, our personal fear of change, and the unwillingness of cultural power structures to let go. Even today, in the second decade of the 21st century, people abound who deny that climate change is a problem, or that it is something that humans caused or even need to address. It may stem from the disbelief that puny beings could impact an environment as huge as the Earth's atmosphere, or maybe it stems from scientific illiteracy, or just an inability to overcome the *fear* of change and to see the problem clearly. Those who claim the planet is actually *cooling*, not warming, haven't visited the villages in Alaska that are being abandoned as they sink deep into the now-melted-and-no-longer-permanent permafrost. They haven't taken a voyage on a commercial cargo ship, traversing the open ocean of the Northeast Passage, along Russia's northern coastline: a route that is ice-free for the first time in a few hundred thousand years. They depend on the fact that warming always appears first and most

around the edges⁵; that the effects are magnified away from the center but are destined to eventually affect the whole, in order to claim that within their own, limited area of experience warming isn't happening and is therefore all a hoax. In order to take a truly comprehensive approach to climate change, it is important to see how all the major systems of human interaction impact each other—energy policies, economic policies, technological infrastructures, food production, transportation systems, political realities, etc. Our world has become far too interwoven for these matters to be dealt with individually, one country at a time. Devising piecemeal solutions without a sophisticated understanding of how these systems interface with each other, and how our actions ripple through the rest of our human systems, will only exacerbate our problems. Likewise, it is easy to find people who deny the existence of slaves, people working in debt bondage or trafficked between countries and forced to work as prostitutes, or deep in mines without any safety gear or regulations. Some deny there's anything wrong with the

⁵ At least 184 of Alaska's 213 villages face significant erosion and flooding, according to a 2003 report by the US General Accountability Office. Today, government agencies have identified at least six Native villages that must immediately respond to severe erosion and flooding, including the villages of Shishmaref, Koyukuk, Kivalina, Newtok, Unalakleet, and Shaktoolik. In most of these villages, relocation is essential for survival.

focus of the world's economy being placed entirely on this quarter's profit. I have friends who deny that there can ever be an alternative to America spending hundreds of billions of dollars to kill people on the other side of the globe in the name of "homeland security". Americans scream when gasoline prices rise above \$4/gallon, while sipping their Starbucks special blend, purchased at \$32/gallon from the drive-thru window, and while European drivers pay more than twice as much without comment. Is it any wonder, when you stop and think about it, that the global economic meltdown in 2008 followed oil prices in excess of \$140 per barrel by less than 60 days? Spikes in oil prices preceded 7 of the last 8 recessions in our country. The deniers see no problem with species extinction, and as they doubt the studies that show our current rate exceeds the normal course of evolution by 1,000% they demonstrate their ignorance of the role diversity plays in Man's own continued survival. We all pat ourselves on the back for passing Clean Air and Clean Water laws, and we enjoy the cleaner air in our cities that has resulted. We all deny that our legislation was incomplete; that many chemicals were not included, are not measured, and are filling our atmosphere even as you read these words. We ignore that the agency tasked with enforcing the law is under-funded and overwhelmed; that the companies supposedly held responsible for following the

laws have literally created new molecules for their manufacturing processes and release them without any studies to determine their toxicity. We remain ignorant that much of the pollution over Los Angeles today has drifted there from manufacturing and power plants in China. We deny that there is any problem when mercury is found in fish from *every single one of 291 tested rivers*, at levels that exceed our legal allowable limit in over a quarter of those waterways. It's not a conspiracy that we value mobility (autos) and home ownership. Actually, most of us demand our comforts and our trance. Yet the trance allows us to ignore that under the veneer of prosperity there is an underbelly of misery, poverty, and isolation. Clearly, by any criteria, we are in near-total denial of the problems we face.

How are we to address this situation? Are we to demonstrate and protest? Rant via a blog or in a chat room at like-minded Internet users? Donate a tiny percentage of our income to "non-profit" groups that pay their CEO twice the President's annual salary? Or should we begin to construct the culture that will address these issues, one step at a time, in our own local community? Can we step out of Wall Street, and back onto Main Street? Can we eat from a local garden, without trucking or flying in unripe produce from thousands of miles away?

Once we can see clearly the devastation unfolding around us, the next step is to make

the changes that will ameliorate the problems. Yet change makes us uncomfortable. Very, very, uncomfortable. Our brains use about 20 watts of energy, equivalent to the light bulb in your refrigerator. Evolution has led our brains to develop habits, ways of operating within the world that allow our body's precious energy resources to be devoted not to repeating common, energy-intensive mental calculations, but to coping with the novel problems that crop up from time to time. In other words, we function most of the time unconsciously, on autopilot. Our mind scans the incoming data from our senses and matches that information to our experience. Once a match is found, the behavior that previously resulted in an acceptable outcome is selected and we proceed to act out of habit. The more frequently a particular strategy is used, the more often it is used; even in situations where it may not be appropriate. "Neurons that fire together, wire together" is a new saying in our culture, and it means that repeated actions become habits and, eventually, ruts that are nearly impossible to get out of. Real change, then, becomes scary, uncharted territory: our brains haven't any experience with this new behavior, and so we envision many bad things that could potentially result, and by focusing on those undesired outcomes, we are immobilized with fear. If the new behavior is only slightly removed from our past experience, we can

see our way clear to make a small change:
“I’ll move my money out of the multinational financial institution and into a local credit union, but a wholesale and radical dismantling of our American economy? Not likely, at least if I have anything to say about it.”

Radical change *has* happened in the past though, so it is informative to learn the conditions that allowed that to happen. Usually, radical change is forced upon us; we don’t decide to change, the environment changes and we have no choice in the matter. There is no rain, the crops don’t grow for a few years in a row, and we either have to find something else to eat, move to where there is rain, or die. Occasionally, however, change is a choice. In those cases, the individuals who lead the way seem to do so because they relinquish their own feelings of resistance by recognizing that *they make this change for the benefit of others*. Gandhi didn’t focus on his own liberation from British rule; he focused on the liberation of the entire country. Tibetan lamas, languishing in prison, continue to focus on drawing their Chinese captors to enlightenment, seeing this as the change required to effect their own release. Vietnamese monks, setting themselves on fire to protest the destruction of life during times of war, offer their own lives as witness to violent destruction in an attempt to foster a willingness to act non-violently in others.

The issues we face today are deeply entrenched in the foundations of our culture. They stem from structures that hold immense amounts of power over individuals and over Nature. If we try to discern the root causes of these problems, not just the surface symptoms they present, it is quickly clear that effective change will not be personal change, rather it will be fundamental, systemic change. Much of our worldview is rooted in history: in what that history has wrought upon our genes, and in the ways it has shaped culture. Effective and conscious change will only be possible once we recognize the impact our collective memories have on our actions.

We will not *choose* to make effective change about our use of oil without addressing the way in which our economy allows business to externalize costs⁶.

⁶ From “*The Value of Nothing*” by Raj Patel: “In 2009, the cell phone company Nokia posted profits of €490 million, on €12.7 billion in sales, with a dividend over 20% higher than in the previous year. To make its phones, as makers of electronic equipment the world over do, it uses minerals extracted from bloody conflict in the Congo, where 70% of the world’s reserves of coltan are found. Coltan is the source of niobium and tantalum, used to make the capacitors at the heart of most portable electronic gadgetry. In patrolling access to these resources, military units in the Congo have raped, tortured, enslaved, and killed. Women struggling to bring up children in the Congo have a life expectancy of 47 years, continue to suffer through the world’s worst rape epidemic and earn just over half what men do--\$191 per year. This happens

Whenever possible, business pushes the costs of pollution prevention and clean up onto society, rather than charging the consumer. We will not *choose* to make effective change in our use of oil without addressing land reform; the way business can buy the “rights” to drill for oil on someone else’s land despite their protests. We will not *choose* to make effective change in our use of oil without addressing how we currently use our national defense forces to protect overseas oil supplies on behalf of American companies. We will not *choose* to make effective change in our use of oil as long as we see Nature as a resource, under Man’s dominion, and not as sentience valuable in its own right.

Just changing out incandescent light bulbs for fluorescents will not solve anything. Personal lifestyle choices and personal psychological growth are both helpful as role models, and as manifestations or reminders of one’s own core values and principles. But it is entirely insufficient as a way to change the trajectory of civilization; that kind of change requires that we confront power, stop power from exploiting lives and Nature, and

whether coltan prices are high or low, but with prices down at the moment, workers in the coltan mines now have to work much harder to be able to earn the same amount that they did in the boom years. These are the bloody externalities of electronics in general, but they look even darker when we are duped into believing we are getting something like a cell phone for free.”

replace power with institutions that do reflect our core values. We can't buy soy burgers and buy hybrid cars and check the box marked, "Green Power" on our utility bills and purchase our way out of this current societal model, based as it is on ever-growing consumerism. We can't shop our way to sustainable.

The actions we take in confronting the existing power structures must be themselves rooted in compassion. We act *for* the benefit of *all* life, not *against* entrenched beliefs. What are our core values? What do we stand for? It behooves us to take a few moments, or hours, regularly to examine these questions. Can we see life in every being, every plant, and every rock⁷ around us? Science shows us demonstrably each and every day that we live within an energy matrix, that the boundaries between you and I are a moving flux that can't be pinned down, or located on a map; instead the energy that feels like *me* blends with the energy I see as *you*. You reflect my energy back to me, what I do to you I do to myself. That leads us easily to the understanding that we swim in the river of energy that carries us throughout our lives. As in aikido, we are most effective when we learn to bend the energy that approaches, rather than fight against it: we merge our energy with what is already around us. We hold pro-peace rallies,

⁷ Jesus: "Crack open any rock, there I am."

not anti-war rallies. We work for improved, universal medical care, not against the entrenched, profit-focused health insurance companies.

As we deepen our understanding of Nature and our place within it, we recognize our shared Humanity. Our actions shift from one of "us helping them" to one of "for the good of All". The idea of "for the good of all" is the opposite of the current notion, prominent in political dialogue in recent years, that a "rising tide lifts all boats". The latter expresses the sense that what is good for me and particularly, within the American context, what is good for my business, will eventually become good for everyone. It is a self-centered opinion that allows domination and exploitation, two integral aspects at the core of the post-modern worldview. It creates a hierarchy where those at the top, those who are currently "getting theirs", need not worry about those at the bottom, for they will surely get some soon enough, just not now. Seeing the connections that join all beings, we can create a paradigm that supports and uplifts all of us together, rather than just a few at the top. We are not locked into a dysfunctional, me first structure. By working for the benefit of all, even in times when I might have to give some of my own back to the commons, all of life shares in the uplifting. We confront the traditional power structures directly by offering an inclusive solution that supports life more effectively.

We can't do this work alone, in large part because we are never truly alone. Rosa Parks was just one person going to jail for breaking the law; it wasn't until the entire community of Montgomery, Alabama rose up to support her that segregation on public transportation was finally ended. Demonstrations by citizens of the U.S.S.R. were forbidden, yet one sign appeared, then three, and one day they managed to form a human chain stretching hundreds of miles along their European borders by holding hands. Within weeks, we watched with rapt attention, as the Berlin Wall became a sieve in the span of just a few hours, ending decades of Cold War. Nelson Mandela endured 27 years in prison, while the masses of people supporting him pulled together and brought apartheid to an end. Women from all walks of life demonstrated, protested, suffered in jails and at home, yet managed to win their right to vote. In my own generation, we have seen a few at the vanguard be imprisoned for stating their case for justice and liberty, for civil rights and women's rights and peace, while many who stand behind them care for their families, raise awareness, and pressure the political and economic structures into wholesale, radical change. A successful movement requires people able and willing to be in the forefront, to bear any cost, while simultaneously demanding a mass of people walking behind their leaders in support

roles. Can you find your place in bringing about the paradigm shifts we need today?

In these movements, we pattern our behavior after the changes we seek. Our actions must be holistic, Universal and non-partisan. Holistic, meaning concerned with the whole, not just one particular part. When we touch any energy stream, the entire Web of Life resonates. Our recent industrial paradigm has largely ignored that fact. A big portion of the work we are doing to create a new way of being on the Earth is learning, or remembering, how to interact with Nature and other beings with integrity, honesty and dignity. We need to recognize that action in one aspect of a situation affects other aspects, too. Throughout this book, as we focus on an economic problem for example, we will find it also affects politics, the environment, and our own spirituality. And remember: you are what you do in the dark. When people think they can't be seen, that they can get away with something, their true self shines through. Act from your own moral foundation; show us your light without the filters we so often put in place to hide our true selves.

As we seek out solutions that restore dignity to our communities, we can listen to our hearts as well as our minds. There are neurons in our heart tissue, and in our stomach. Thus your gut and your heart can provide wisdom that arises from a different perspective than what we constantly get from

our mind. Quieting the mind, through meditation or mindfulness practice, allows these quieter voices to be heard.

So, what is holding us back? We feel, deep in our hearts, that our place in the Universe is alongside the other creatures that share this Earth with us. And yet, we allow our desperate thirst for oil to push our wells into riskier locations, into ecosystems that cannot be recovered when the inevitable spill takes place. We need electricity so desperately that we abide over 450 nuclear power plants worldwide, and thousands of coal-fired plants that generate 130 *million tons* of toxic and radioactive ash and nearly 150 million tons of carbon dioxide each year in the US alone. We dilute our own currency, cause inflation in other words, by borrowing trillions of dollars to prop up bankrupt banks. We go to work each day, and on the way home we perform our parts as good consumers, buying food products that are less than half as nutritious as our food even 40 years ago. We cocoon in our homes, each person alone in front of a screen either TV or computer, and then wonder why we feel so unfulfilled, so unsatisfied, and so anxious.

What is keeping us from making the changes we crave so intensely? Most often, we are held immobile by our fear of change. We don't know the future, but we sense that it will be the same as the present if we don't

rock the boat. We forget that life is so much different today compared to when we were growing up, and while laboring under the delusion that the future will just be like today only bigger, we fear change that might bring about situations we don't want to face. From a liberal viewpoint, changing our individual consciousness will eventually spread that consciousness until, just as in the "hundred monkey syndrome", our beliefs magically propagate themselves throughout society like a nitrate-fed algae bloom in the Gulf of Mexico. It is much more comfortable to view the world this way, rather than to accept that the power structures; economic, political and cultural, will never change, that they can only be replaced. They will not go quietly, my friend.

We aren't going to change how money is created without rethinking how and how much people are compensated for their work. Is there any justification for one person making \$72,500 per hour and another making \$7.25? If they are both performing a service that is vital to our economy, like cleaning the mess people leave on the table when they finish their restaurant meal, educating children, or unblocking the pipe that lets sewage leave your home, why should their labor be valued less than that of a person who is short-selling a stock? Why should the wages of a plumber be taxed while the profits from a foreign currency speculative transaction get off tax-free? We

aren't going to protect the rights of people who live on land that is suddenly found to contain natural gas-containing shale by not questioning the need to pollute the ground and crack the very bedrock on which we sit. We won't be able to price oil to reflect the cost of cleaning up the pollution and climate change it causes, without addressing the beliefs that the economy must continually grow using cheap oil, and that oil producers need not pay for the damages they cause. We aren't going to believe climate scientists, 98% of whom understand and can prove that climate change is caused by burning fossil fuels⁸, unless we are willing to learn about a branch of science we were never taught in school, or are willing to listen to people who have made the study of climate their life's work, and until we can accept the basic, logical truth that cause leads to effect in a demonstrable and real way. We aren't going to change the current paradigm of seeking "homeland security" by enduring vigorous pat-downs in airports, and by killing people "only accidentally" around the world, until we stop borrowing money to fund the US military and replace it with humanitarian projects that promote justice, equal rights, education, and end global hunger. And yet,

⁸ The different sources of CO₂: volcanoes, deforestation and burning fossil fuels, emit different *isotopes* of carbon, and so the source of the CO₂ that has been added to the atmosphere has been proven to come from the latter source.

we fear change so much that these suggestions are not seen as credible, or even possible. We see the future unfolding just as it does today, without recognizing that my life, and your life, is different than it was 5 years ago, and radically different than 20 years ago, and unrecognizable from 50 years ago. How can we expect that our future will be more of today, just bigger?

We can't just ask for change when we are ready, it springs out of the dark and catches us by surprise. Additionally, change is often painful, resulting in feelings of loss or grief. As our ego exists primarily to recognize the current situation from past experience, and to use a minimum amount of energy to cope with the new experience, we naturally fear that change leads directly to pain. If I have worked hard to have a relationship or material goods, change often acts to separate me from what I have struggled to enjoy. I have become attached to the fruits of my labors, and I fear their loss.

In what ways do we resist change? We identify ourselves with our stories, the tales we tell others and ourselves about what we have endured or conquered in order to get to where we are today. Do we fear that changing our point of view will negate the very stories we depend on to feel useful or successful? Do we think that letting go of our attachment to any particular person, place or thing will change our fundamental being in

some meaningful way? Do we hold a sense of being entitled to a particular reward for our good behavior, or entitled to avoid a negative consequence because an action is unconscious?

Understanding our true nature banishes fear. Fear destroys our world and our values; it is the “great mind killer”. We find it difficult if not impossible to act appropriately while frozen in fear. Our challenges in life act to purify our soul, to teach us lessons about how to behave, and to motivate change. All of the drama in life is a cosmic set-up so that I can see myself reflected in you. In order to have greater understanding of reality, we have to get outside the box of our normal day-to-day interactions; we have to see a bigger picture. Inevitably, that means our perspective and our life will change.

One big barrier to change is our past success. Our reactions to life are more than 90% unconscious, based on what has worked in the past, knee-jerk reactions that allow us to act without as little thought as possible. We act out of habit to such a degree that we don’t even know why we do what we do. Much has been made lately in New Thought circles of the *Law of Attraction*. This idea purports to teach us how to attract what we want most in life. It tells us that what we focus on we perceive, which is true enough. But it gives a few false impressions; one, that we even know what is in our best interests (do you *really need* that 10,000 square foot

house with the 5-car garage that is on your treasure map?). For another, it ignores that we act 90% unconsciously, meaning that even if we focus intentionally on co-creating our life, creating our own reality, most of what we create will be based on those very habits and ungoverned reactions we are trying to transcend but can't see. We don't *co-create* our reality as much as we *engage with* reality. I have to ask, if you are a follower of this idea that we co-create our reality, how's that working for you? Do you see proof of the saying, "As you sow, so shall you reap", or even, "Garbage in, garbage out"? Or do you instead feel victorious over life because you managed to manifest a new Mercedes? For a third, it implies that we are happy when we shop from the Universal Catalog. We can't shop our way to happiness. Have you noticed that you get less and less thrill from shopping, that it doesn't *feel as good*, or satisfy you for as long, as it used to?

These habits are deeply rooted in our body. As reactions to past events, the emotions blend with our physical being and become an ingrained part of our small self. Merely thinking that I want to change my perceptions, or utilizing an affirmation, will not dominate the emotions already deeply anchored in my body, I need a greater emotion to replace what has already warped my consciousness. This is why many people need tragedy or catastrophe in order to make a substantial change to their lifestyle. The

good news is that what seems like radical change on the level of the entire system often seems like common sense at the level of the individual unit. Again, remember how masses of people drove the great grassroots movements we have seen: women's rights, civil rights, the anti-apartheid movement, abolition and the fall of communism in the Soviet Union, because each person felt it was the right thing to do.

It may also be that we feel insignificant, that it will be useless for us to change first. We may think, "Let the Big Guy change first, I'll follow". Or maybe, "We need a cataclysm or a leader to effect significant change." Either way, we are merely excusing our inaction. We are responsible for our own actions. We can only listen to our ego or our Spirit. Which one has your best interest at heart?

We struggle in the various aspects of our lives when we hold beliefs that are untrue. Ask yourself:

How do I seek	spiritual	safety?
	economic	
	physical	
	emotional	
	cultural	

We validate our false beliefs when we continue to focus on the illusion our ego has created, on the stories we try to embody in our life's play. But why change? As we have seen in news reports from around America, *all* of our institutions are broken, lacking compassion and love for humanity and for Earth. To evolve into the next stage of conscious awareness, we need change agents to step up the energy level of their work to bring new ideas to fruition. Are you ready to help?

If you are, ask yourself: "What agendas or beliefs am I holding onto that prevent me from seeing or creating something new?" Understanding that we are the source of our experience, even if mostly unconsciously, we can identify and remove barriers that prevent love entering our lives, that prevent love from being reflected to us by those around us because we can't touch our love for ourselves. We can examine the emotional baggage we carry, emotions containing resentment or lost love, or even old agreements or patterns of behavior that no longer serve us. By accepting the inevitability of change, we open the door to unimaginable possibilities. It helps to remember that *this too, shall pass*. We cure our fear of change by leaving behind the mind structure that created it. Water the seeds of your life, not the weeds!

Radical Change

So here's the basic education in revolution that you didn't get in public school. There are two cardinal differences between liberalism and radicalism. The first can be characterized as idealism versus materialism. Liberalism is idealist. It sees social reality as the realm of ideas; in concepts, language, and attitudes. In contrast, radicalism is materialist. Radicals see society as composed of actual institutions, usually economic, political, cultural, and religious, which wield power, including the power to use violence.

The second disagreement is on the primary social unit. Liberalism is individualist, locating the basic organization of society in the individual. Hence, liberal strategies for political change are almost exclusively individual actions. For radicals, the basic social unit is a class or group, whether that's a person's race, gender or sexual orientation, economic class, religious faith or other grouping. Radicalism of whatever stripe understands oppression as group-based harm. For liberals, defining people as members of a group *is* the harm. In contrast, radicals believe that identifying your interests with others who are dispossessed—and developing loyalty to your people—is the first, crucial step in building a liberation movement.

Liberals essentially think that oppression is a mistake, a misunderstanding, and that changing people's minds is the way to change the world. Hence, liberals place tremendous emphasis on education as a political strategy. Radicals understand oppression as a set of interlocking institutions, and believe that one way or another, the strategy for liberation involves direct confrontation with power, confrontation designed to take those institutions apart.

Liberals believe that an individual solves the problems of society by taking action to address issues in their own life, such as by voting, recycling or swapping out light bulbs. Radicals understand that institutions never let go of power by choice; they believe that forming coalitions and drawing the masses together under a single banner is the only way to speak truth to power that will make a difference.

Neither of the common liberal approaches—personal psychological change or personal lifestyle choices—is going to disrupt the global arrangements of power. They both ultimately approach injustice by rerouting the goal from political change to personal change. This is easier, much easier, because it makes no demands on us. It lets us off the hook by allowing us to feel smug that we “have done what we can”, and if the problem persists, it is because others have failed to do

what we ourselves have done. It requires no courage or sacrifice, no persistence or honor, which is what direct confrontation with power must require. Personal purity only asks for shopping and smugness. The mainstream version involves hybrid cars, soy milk, soy burgers, and soy babies, and checking off the “green power” option on your electric bill.

Another issue with personal change being the dominant problem-solving paradigm is that it involves negotiation and compromise. Have you asked yourself recently why, despite four decades of laws and regulations and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and ever-rising awareness about pollution in nature, that the air is still foul over many U.S. cities? Or why more than a quarter of the fish caught in a random sampling of rivers around the country contain levels of mercury exceeding legal limits? Or why we are even discussing building a pipeline to bring Canadian tar sands clear across America in order to continue to fuel our vehicles with gasoline? Where are the environmental groups that started after the first Earth Day to protect Nature and all its glories? They continue to sit at the table with corporate America, offering to trade this restriction for that profit, and that access to a watershed for this tax-deductible contribution. They have sunk costs, and vested interests, that militate towards compromises that keep both

capitalism and environmental protection viable as business models. They have become co-opted into the paradigm of business-as-usual, and loath seeing their own jobs disappear, unneeded and fulfilled. They continue to negotiate not laws and standards that prevent harm, but compromise agreements that allow pollution to continue. And by requiring that the regulators and enforcement agencies get their funding from a Congress that is subject to the whims of corporate contributions to finance their campaigns, we allow the fox to guard the henhouse. If you are against slavery and you want to produce a documentary describing why slavery is bad, would you devote equal time in your production to the slaver explaining why he thinks slavery is acceptable behavior, so that both sides are represented? Of course not! We have become so politically correct, that we allow industry to water down any attempts at regulation solely in order to present a solution that allows both sides to declare victory. Let's get comfortable with calling out unethical and unjust behavior. Let's defend those without a voice; be they children, those living outside our country, or the very essences of Nature: the air, water, plants and animals we depend on for our survival. Let's fight for them like we mean it, with our great and fierce love!

As long as we accept that conservative vs. liberal is the only game in town, as long as we persist in calling structural shifts 'radical'

and discarding them without a second's thought, we will maintain that path we currently tread. Personal change and compromise will never overturn centuries of corporate inertia. It is best if we begin to understand what radical change means, and how best to implement it. We can no longer be distracted by the trance of the modern world, turning to entertainment or drugs as a way to stay numb to what is happening all around us. Nor can we be content with patching over the holes and cracks that appear in society; the foundation is rotten and painting the walls a new color will not prevent the house from falling down.

Your Money or Your Life

I am placing this chapter at the front of the book, partly because I am scared that it will be the one that precipitates devastating change sooner than the other challenges, and partly because we already know about many of the solutions that could ameliorate this issue and render it harmless. But we will find throughout the book, that we cannot look at one individual issue, or find one simple solution, for any particular issue. There are so many layers to this cake, even ideas that sound great have unexpected consequences.

The Idea of a ‘Commons’

Winona LaDuke writes:

“The allotment system [placing Indians on a reservation to take away land they lived on and to teach them the concept of “owning property”] was alien to our traditional concepts of land. In our society a person harvested rice in one place, trapped in another place, gathered medicines in a third place, and picked berries in a fourth. These locations depended on the ecosystem; they were not necessarily contiguous. But the government said to each

Indian, “Here are your eighty acres; this is where you’ll live.” Then, after each Indian had received an allotment, the rest of the land was declared “surplus” and given to white people to homestead or “develop”. What happened to my reservation happened to reservations all across the country.

The state of Minnesota took our pine forests away and sold them to timber companies, and then taxed us for the land that was left. When the Indians couldn’t pay the taxes, the state confiscated the land. But how could these people pay taxes? In 1910, they could not even read or write English.”

She points to concepts that we must examine if we are to rebuild an economy that works for justice and peace out of the ruins of our current, corporate/consumer paradigm. First, there is this modern idea of “ownership”. The native peoples understood that they were but stewards of the land and resources for coming generations. God did not place people, plants, animals and minerals here on Earth just so that I could waste them, control them, and limit their use by others. They are not *investments* that must increase in value with the passage of time or through scarcity, real, imagined, or manufactured.

From the European perspective, the native Americans were willing to sell the island now called Manhattan for a mere handful of trinkets. From the Americans' perspective, they had no idea of the consequences that would result by taking the trinkets; as they didn't believe the land was theirs and theirs alone, they could no more envision selling the land and ceding the rights to its use than they could imagine manufacturing more to take its place. When the colonists began pushing the natives off the land, away from their ancestral hunting, fishing, gathering, and burial grounds, they still did not understand how this could be happening. Hadn't they been willing to share? Didn't they show those first starving settlers how to reap the bountiful harvest the land was already providing? Why was there such a need to control, to *own*?

Second, the idea that 'I am restricted to a small piece of the Great Land, one that I alone control' is an extremely limiting one. Can I manage to survive if my access to the food and water I need is only what I can find on my tiny portion of earth? Usually what I can grow or harvest is not sufficient. Suddenly, rather than harvesting what is needed from what is available, I don't have access to the multitude of resources I could have if we but share. I find I need to trade my limited, scarce supplies available from my small plot or find some other way to trade energy, such as in working for wages at

the command of another. Because I am afraid of scarcity, I accept an inadequate piece of land in exchange for the servitude of work. I concede that I am unable to care for myself without the cooperation of others, or their authority and control. I trust that in the end, owning a small bit of land will leave me secure, safe and fed in my old age (though this plan rarely works quite this way). I become part of a system that is designed to control, exploit, dominate and tax me, through my need to work to generate the income I need to survive.

Third, it is hard to see how I can step out of this paradigm. Modern agriculture has allowed the few to feed the many, as long as the many are willing to work for the resources needed to trade for their food. This need to work isn't always accepted by everyone; it is this conflict between those willing to knuckle down and work and those people happy to lie around the house and take money from the government or relatives to avoid working that causes most people to reject the idea that private property ownership is a root cause of our economic problems. The dominant point of view is that everyone needs to bear the responsibility to feed themselves. The corollary is that we are too deep into this paradigm to be able to change. Do you have the skills and knowledge to be able to feed yourself, even if you had access (free or otherwise) to land? Have we paved over too many fruits and

vegetables and trees to be able to live from seasonally available produce grown nearby? Has easy access to petroleum-fueled agriculture allowed the population to grow too large for the land to support us naturally?

Most people believe that a system where food is free to all will not work. But realize that the historical pattern of machine automation, coupled with modern innovations that are finding substitutions for “scarce” resources, could lead us into a position where no good or service will require a “value” or price tag. This increasing reliance on machine labor has been the source of most of our productivity gains over the last century (good: improved control, safety and lower costs in mass production through greater use of robots) and the reason that building new manufacturing facilities has not solved our unemployment problem (bad: robots do the work, not people). This is a very difficult thing to consider, as we are used to measuring our own self worth by our productivity and wealth. What would life be like if the essentials came to us for free? However, the pattern of constant technological improvement coupled with automated machinery can theoretically create an economic environment where the abundance of materials and production mediums are so high and efficient, that most humans will have little need to ‘purchase’ anything, let alone ‘work for a living’, in the

traditional sense. We would be left to explore, create, relate, and yes, even be lazy if that is what we choose.

All of these questions arise when we discuss returning to the native peoples' perspective of land use. That perspective is referred to in today's society as the "commons". Common resources are resources whose value is due to nature and to the activities and demands of society as a whole, and not to the efforts or skill of individual people or organizations. Land is the most obvious example. Land's value is not intrinsic, it derives from the use to which it is put, its location, or the resources placed under it by Nature and Creation itself. We each have a right to the resources we need for our survival and wellbeing. The commons is the perspective that restricts an individual's ability to limit or control access to something they themselves did not create.

Commons is not just what we share, but how we share. It's just as important as how we own. ***It is a vision of collaborative, reciprocal and equitable relationships between people, resources, and power that foster local community resilience, global ecological stewardship, and people-centered, not business-centered, decision making.*** A commons arises whenever a community decides that it wishes to manage a resource in a collective manner, with a special regard for equitable access,

use, and sustainability. A great many commons contribute value to our lives that surpasses that of the market. The gifts of nature are fantastically productive. Life itself would be impossible without air, water, soil and diverse biological systems. Not only is this idea not new, it is increasingly obvious that it must become our primary focus if we are to thrive as a species on this planet.

The commons is not just about free use⁹. Even civic institutions like libraries, roadways, police and fire protection, bring value to our communities in ways that the market cannot. Along with the benefits an individual might receive by using a resource comes a certain responsibility to the larger community, to maintain and sustain that resource for future generations. Equity and stewardship are intertwined at the center of a commons with community members acting as the protectors, co-creators and beneficiaries.

In capitalism, we pay for what could be free. Yet, what security comes from working long hours or performing meaningless or repetitive tasks? As wealth measured in dollars increases, our wellbeing decreases. We forgo trees in favor of air conditioning, or we forgo quiet for Prozac. Our living spaces feature home theaters, not space to host community potlucks. We see ads everywhere, not art, and the speed of our lives prevents

⁹ In both senses of the word *free*: free speech and free beer.

us from appreciating the creativity of either. The increasing numbers of homeless people assault our compassion and care, numbing us to the suffering our decisions create. We seek solace in shopping, in gadgets, rather than in thriving relationships. Does money motivate you? If you got more tax refund when your gasoline use declines, would you drive less? Do you prefer your Discover Card for accessing a credit line, because you get a 1% rebate (after paying 18% interest) at the end of the year? Heavily taxing work and lightly taxing the use of common resources (air, water, energy, airwaves, plant and animal life) does not encourage people to reach for the goals we share.

The fact that we find it difficult to imagine a culture that shares much or most of its resources shows us how far we are from having an active, nurturing commons today. The terminology of the commons; common good, public interest, communal ownership, these are all words that have been co-opted by the corporate and governmental power structures in order to prevent any actual manifestation of these ideas. Instead, the sound bites lead consumers to believe they are helping others when, in fact, they are only transferring wealth to the already-rich at the expense of society and our planet. Let us reclaim the original meaning to the words, or create new words that are free of the baggage of decades of misuse.

Slowly but persistently a whole constellation of ideas associated with the commons is taking root among small groups around the world. Out of all this we see the birth of a new story to guide us into the future, which can be partly summarized in the following points:

- We are better people, more caring and sharing, than how the current market paradigm defines us. Once our needs are met, acquiring *more* does not increase our happiness. Our intrinsic nature as human beings is to care for others, not to claw our way to the top of the corporate hierarchy. Cooperation, not competition, is the order of the day in Nature.
- In most ways, the market-based society fails to deliver on its promises. Even those “winners” who amass huge wealth do not generally experience a sense of happiness or fulfillment. We have lost sight, each one of us, of how much is *enough*. We continue to seek more and more stuff, believing the lie that just a little bit more will finally make us happy. Most people are left feeling anxious, exhausted, insecure, and disconnected from each other.
- This economic story is not the natural order of the universe. We *can* work together to create an economy that looks out for everyone, bringing us together rather than driving us apart.

We *can* feel secure without working long hours doing meaningless work, and seeing poorer people as a threat.

- Both government and the market can make positive contributions to our lives if they operate in ways that boost rather than deplete the commons. There is a place for structure, and at least as we transition into a just world, a need for regulation in order to preserve what is good. Allowing companies to pollute the land, air and water at will is not helpful.
- Nearly everyone can play a valuable role in society, and no one should be cast out from the economy or forced to live in poverty. Why would someone be eager or willing to participate in a society or an economy that is oppressing them? Children are not born in full-blown rebellion to the status quo; that attitude arises following repeated episodes of disempowerment, exploitation and repression. Raised in a society of equality and justice, humans will contribute and will find all their needs can be met. Imagine how different our culture would be if everyone had the time and energy to exercise their creativity, rather than be mindlessly occupied or distracted in order to best serve their corporate masters.

- The measures necessary to restore our natural environment and save the planet will actually strengthen our communities and enhance our lives rather than diminish them. We vacation in pristine parts of Nature for a very valid reason: when we connect with the natural world our spirit is fed. When we support others, show compassion, and give of our talents we grow and develop in surprising ways. Eliminating waste is better design. Not polluting should become a given, not an afterthought.
- There is enough to go around. Sufficiency, not wealth, is the opposite of poverty. Focusing on real wealth: relationships, care for others, generosity, instead of phantom wealth: amount of fiat currency hoarded or spent on meaningless toys and trinkets, will substantially lower our need to pollute the planet and consume our finite resources.
- Depending just on ourselves, we will not always be successful; we all depend on others to help us from time to time. When your survival depends on grazing and foraging, and the luck of the hunt, sharing your bounty today helps ensure that others will share theirs, tomorrow. Today other factors are in play, but sharing, whether seen

as generosity, insurance or karma, is still a useful concept.

There are many valuable assets that belong to us all, and they should be used in a sustainable way to create an equitable world.

A recurring theme throughout “*America is Dead*” is reversing the modern trend that has more and more of our public space enclosed by private, for-profit, entities. The idea that the *free hand of the market* will ultimately solve every problem by finding its price equilibrium continues to steal resources and knowledge, funded originally by citizens and society, to make a profit for a few people at society’s expense, and to pollute public spaces that the market cannot possibly own. Returning to a foundation of protecting Nature first, the public’s interest second, and business last, will bring a level of sanity back to our economics, to our politics, and to our relationship with the Earth. We use the term “commons” to represent the public interest, and to refer to the wealth and abundance that surrounds us that we all share. It refers to our air, land and water, as well as ideas and knowledge that taxpayer-funded research uncovers, and even such notions as the broadcast spectrum, technology-enabled access to a small portion of the natural world. It brings our shared values: the importance of family and

relationship, protection of the environment, an equal voice in our democratic system, and even simple beauty, into prominence and offers a world where these hard-to-price necessities of life are prized more than monetary profit. What price would you pay to prevent your child from dying from chemically induced cancer at the age of six? What price to prevent the last leopard from dying, ever? Or what price to keep fish in the ocean alive and toxics-free?

We Americans are often blind to how multinational corporations piggyback on International Monetary Fund and World Bank policies to privatize resources and public entities in foreign countries. Some day it will be our own resources that have been gobbled up, if we fail to question and prevent this usurpation of our commons. We look the other way as corporations fund research in university labs, labs built and furnished with taxpayer funds, and then profit from the patents that result from the research. We allow public schools to sell their student's 'eyeballs' to advertisers, in effect forcing students to submit to being brainwashed by marketers without a chance to change the channel, because we choose not to fund the schools adequately ourselves. How can you place a value on healthy eating habits, or put another way, how do we value the loss when a young child "learns" that eating chips and drinking high-fructose corn syrup is "better" than eating vegetables?

Our shared resources are often privatized under the notion that markets appropriately value goods and services. Yet we constantly see cases where mergers and buyouts limit consumer choice, resulting in prices that soar while service and selection erode. Microsoft encloses the operating system of the newest of technologies, before regulation and legislation has time to understand the burgeoning marketplace or the threats enclosure poses to our commons, and makes it difficult if not impossible to separate out their browser and use another, better, product instead. Monsanto genetically modifies seeds, patents and sterilizes them, and creates a product that must be purchased each and every year, along with the pesticides that work best with their particular DNA modification. Under our current paradigm of allowing privatization of resources that used to be public, Monsanto is even allowed to sue, to destroy crops owned by, and to ruin, farmers whose own crop is contaminated by *wind-borne* Monsanto seed; farmers who had no intent whatsoever to use *any* Monsanto product. Imagine if every road in America, previously publicly owned and maintained, became a private toll road.

By allowing corporations to gain dominion over public resources, we also accept as normal the valuing of short-term profit over long-term sustainability. Calling this process privatization is just meant to hide what is

really going on during the *austerity measures* in countries undergoing a monetary crisis: enclosure of the commons. As David Bollier writes in the article, “Imagining a New Politics of the Commons: “This [enclosure] spawns a different set of social relationships in our dealings with each other and with necessary resources. Enclosure turns us into a mass of pay-per-use consumers in search of bargains. It makes it harder for us to stand up for something larger than our individual satisfactions. It makes it very difficult for us to work together cooperatively on important projects, such as reinvigorating our hometown or reversing global warming.”

Today *money* is a singular system, designed to work in a particular way, and to benefit particular people. We have no choice; there is only this one financial system. We ignore that diversity, or a multitude of currency and economic systems¹⁰ nested together, increases resiliency while allowing more people access to successful economic lives. We have to acknowledge and become sensitive to exclusion in all areas of life. But

¹⁰ Such as time banks, local currencies that trade as money, local currencies that offer rebates and refunds from locally-owned shops, barter and borrowing systems, and local micro finance groups

ultimately, history shows again and again that the disenfranchised must fight for access, for recognition, for rights. When intellectual property is owned, it can be shrouded, hoarded, and eventually forgotten. Electric vehicles designed in the early 1900s, were purchased by automakers and destroyed. Today we see the patenting seeds and animals, copyrighting accounting methods and page-numbering schemes¹¹, even the design and licensing of DNA. These are not examples of *intellectual property* that must be protected from unauthorized use. These are examples of naturally occurring objects and beings, and generic procedures. There is nothing here that should be excluded from general use, no damage that can occur when multitudes of people use a particular plant.

We place such importance on making money that concerns about polluting a local ecosystem have no bearing on corporate decision-making. Corners are cut at every turn; bonuses are dependent upon making more profit than the previous year; the costs of making a product safe are weighed against the benefits to the company of making a safe product, and the consumer is the person who ultimately pays the price through injury, illness or even death. There are countless

¹¹ The copyright on the *page-numbering scheme* for Federal court decisions means that anyone wanting to read all the Court's decisions must pay over \$40,000 annually to the copyright holder.

examples, from egregious (BP's poor, cost-cutting decisions during the Deepwater Horizon disaster) to merely unethical and reprehensible (Ford Motor Company's weighing of the costs of lawsuits vs. recalling an unsafe vehicle, and choosing lawsuits over safety).

The current version of the capitalist model relies upon the drive for profit, and the ideal of monopoly, to increase creativity. The goal of business is to create a product that does not yet exist, ensure a market for that product, and then maximize profits until someone else begins to compete for the same customers. But when there is no competition, there is little need for innovation; witness that once Internet Explorer (IE) had defeated the Netscape browser, IE didn't change for more than seven years, until Firefox came along. Business wants a product that is difficult to copy, it wants planned obsolescence, and it often doesn't make the best possible product until a competitor forces it to do so.

In a cooperative model, you work because you intrinsically want to create something and stamp your name on it proudly. You innovate to improve, not for monetary reward. You strive to develop, because evolution is in your DNA. You welcome the help of others, because diversity adds resiliency to any product. Other people bring different needs, experiences, and training to bear on the topic, and the result is far more

robust than what any one person could create alone. A product that results from cooperation can be as capable as any made under proprietary license; the charge that goods designed by committee are always faulty fails to recognize that committees are usually unfocused and thus attempt to do too much, or they are distracted by the politics of the group and don't concentrate on producing the best outcome or product.

Can you see that even politics represents a commons within our society that we would do well to protect from enclosure? While the two major American political parties, Democrats and Republicans, did not spend more in the 2010 elections than they did in 2008, outside, corporate, unaccountable money did spend nearly the same amount (US\$2 billion) as both parties combined, and thus the *total* spending to influence voters was the most in our election history. The votes of legislators have become just another product, available for purchase by the highest bidder. Every elected official will measure his or her vote against the likelihood that it will enrage the corporate world and encourage a campaign to prevent his or her re-election. Yet another public resource, the votes and opinions of citizens, has become enclosed by private, for-profit entities. Until we can protect the commons (and our democracy!) by prohibiting corporate expenditures to influence laws: by stating without equivocation that companies

cannot spend a dime on lobbyists, any form of political advertising, or campaign contributions, we will continue to see our country fade.

The cultural landscape today is comprised of three basic interests: business, government, and people. When these three groups are out of balance, the basic pathologies are:

- Private sector (commerce) dominant: the market, or profit, is king. Business exploits society, both through controlling labor and externalizing costs
- Government dominant: a fascist state controls business and society, this is the central-planning model
- Society dominant: the welfare state, social movements control both business and government

What's different today is that because of globalization, business has fouled the environment by externalizing pollution, creating climate change that will soon become the fourth, and dominant, player. Governments will be overwhelmed with reconstruction and post-disaster support, society will begin to migrate away from climate disasters and shorelines, and commerce will be disrupted as infrastructure is damaged or destroyed, drought and flood ruin crops, and transportation costs soar. Thus the focus will shift to feeding people, rather than consumption of goods, altering

the market paradigm. Central planning has never proven capable of managing agriculture. The people who sit back and wait for either commerce or government to solve global warming, will not survive. The concept of “private” property will have to be reconsidered, as resources dwindle necessitating management that focuses on the greater good; large agribusiness conglomerates will fold due to skyrocketing transportation costs and give up their ownership of large tracts of land; and large populations will abandon land that is no longer suitable for habitation because of climate change. The need to maintain an atmosphere of cooperation and to improve resource management will dominate the relationships of business, government and society.

Our relationship with property will stop being one of ownership and instead become one of management. We will recognize we are only trustees for land and resources that ultimately must be passed on to others for their use, our children and grandchildren for instance, and that we can never truly “own” anything. The cultural landscape will be filled with a collection of trusts and for-benefit entities that manage resources and land, and ensure that every citizen is able to participate in building their community while sharing in the bounty generated by the efforts of all. Constant growth will not be the goal; rather, sustainability will be. Profit will

not be the only goal of commerce as it is today; instead the new goals will be ending scarcity and poverty for everyone.

Government's role takes many forms:

- To prevent enclosure, and ensure access to information
- To mediate disputes
- To manage resources that extend beyond one community or group
- To enforce rules and regulations that protect those who cannot defend themselves, and to protect the entire system; i.e. commerce, society, and the many global states, and their varied relationships
- To support the people's claims when a new commons is being created

While government will still play an integral role in support of the commons, local government will be at the top of the hierarchy, with states less powerful, and the federal government holding little or no control¹². Decision-making will be in the hands of those who are affected by the decisions that are made, and those who have the information and motivation needed to make good decisions. The existence of a commons is only possible within the context of local, collaborative, reciprocal and

¹² A movement is beginning to coalesce that would offer a Constitutional Amendment to allow states to reject any particular federal law. Is this the beginning of the shift of power away from the federal government and towards local communities?

equitable relationships. These relationships hold a commons intact and ensure its fair use and continued health. Can this approach become the foundation of a truly just society?

David Bollier writes:

“At this early stage, the emerging commons movement is picking up particular support from these groups:

- *Environmentalists* trying to protect wilderness areas, stop pollution in its many forms, and win fair compensation for private use of public lands.
- *Local communities* trying to prevent multinational companies from privatizing their public water works or devastating their Main Streets with big-box stores.
- *Hackers and corporate programmers* who are building GNU Linux and thousands of other free software and open-source computer programs.
- *Artists, musicians, and bloggers* who use Creative Commons licenses¹³ to enable the legal sharing and reuse of their works on the Internet.
- *Scientists, academics, and researchers* sharing databases and trying to prevent corporations from

¹³ See page 3 of this book for more information on Creative Commons licenses

patenting basic knowledge in medicine, high technology, and other fields.

- *Farmers*, especially in developing nations, who are trying to prevent biotech companies from imposing upon them genetically-modified crops whose seed cannot be shared and whose ecological effects are troubling.
- *Ordinary citizens* rallying to defend public spaces by opposing intrusive commercialism in civic settings, sports venues, public schools, and personal space”

Some areas of life that are ripe for development of a commons approach include:

- **Health Care.** Whether it is convincing a majority of citizens that the benefits of modern medicine are a basic human right, acknowledging that many of the discoveries that underlie those benefits resulted from government-funded research, or agreeing that stopping transmittable disease early is in everyone’s best interest; it is clear that the commons movement can make progress solving our health care problems.
- **Public Service.** Government can benefit from two themes present in the movement towards greater sharing of resources: transparency and bilateral communications. The

population should at all times understand what a governing body is doing, with or to whom it is doing these things, and for what reasons. Since taxpayers ultimately pay for the data generated throughout all government operations, making that data available for creative mash-ups and improved decision-making only makes sense. It allows the full creative force of the public to come to bear on the issues of the day, and encourages citizens to provide their input and then become part of any solution. The rise of mobile computing and smart phones also serves to improve the ability of citizens to comment on, and shape, public policy continuously, not just at election-time, and especially in those areas most conducive to a commons approach.

- **Lifeforms.** The notion now enshrined in American law that corporations have the rights of people without the responsibilities has led to some bizarre court decisions. Those that grant corporations the ability to patent, and therefore limit and control the use of, life is especially onerous. The reason we have patent and trademark protection is to safeguard the intellectual property of an inventor, someone who has created a product with unique characteristics.

And while life in it many and varied forms certainly fills the bill, there has yet to be a single life form created by a corporation that has commercial use. Until that time, none should be able to restrict the use of plants or animals purely because that company's staff "discovered" an inherent trait.

- Equitable access. Again, as mobile computing becomes ubiquitous in the Western world, ensuring that the *digital divide*¹⁴ remains a threat and not a reality is an ongoing battle. Much needs to be done to ensure that access to the Internet in all its manifestations is provided as much to the poor as to the rich; not only can society benefit by bringing as many voices to the discussion as possible, but also the difference that improved access to information can make in the lives of the poor is proportionately greater than for the rich.
- Sharing resources. We are just beginning to see the benefits of sharing what we have around our neighborhood. Why do we need a lawnmower, used only rarely, in every garage? Current projects that share

¹⁴ Whether it is ensuring access at an affordable price, or preventing large media conglomerates from censoring the traffic on the Internet by using punitive fees for undesired content, this battle is being fought today.

include zip cars, tool swaps arranged through neighborhood associations, garden swaps where home-grown produce is traded, and even people sharing their homes.

- Cooperative economics. Buying in bulk has always offered price savings. Decades ago, food co-ops sprang up as people tried to take advantage of large numbers of people wanting to purchase identical items. Today we see a resurgence of this idea, especially with the growth of Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA). Providing the capital to plant and harvest crops is a wonderful affirmation of the need to cooperate in order to benefit from sharing the land, resources and labor needed to grow food. The idea of *slow money*, where the greed factor is replaced by the expected good that will come to one's community when calculating the return on your investment, is another great example of cooperative economics.
- Caring economics. The dominant economic model places great value on speculation, which is why hedge-fund managers get multi-million dollar annual compensation. Conversely, we value caregivers far less; day-care workers often make minimum wage, which is insufficient to keep them out

of poverty, and many people who care for others, be they children, the infirm, or the elderly, work as volunteers or forego paid work to care for family members. A caring economy would see the benefit that accrues to society when those who need care are well cared for, and rewards that work appropriately.

Isn't it time we took back control of the public domain: our air, water, land, democracy, schools, and health, just to name a few of the commons that impact our daily lives?

Quantitative Easing

The Federal Reserve, twice (as of the writing of this book), has used a process commonly called “quantitative easing” in order to help bring the economy out of recession. They offered as their rationale: keeping interest rates low would spur lending, thus creating jobs, and at the same time, drive investment in the stock market, increasing wealth. In many respects they are correct, but what about the impacts they aren't telling us about?

Before we dive into this topic, let me help ground our understanding of the numbers being bandied about today. For instance, if you were to begin to count one-dollar bills at the rate of one per second, in just over 277.77

hours, or nearly twelve full days later, you would have counted one million dollars. Now, to count a billion dollars, you would continue to count the bills at the same rate for 277,770 hours, or more than 31.7 years. And to count to one trillion dollars, you continue at the same rate for 31,700 years, or *more than 5 times recorded human history*. I will never forget the day in September 2008, when I was deployed to south Texas by FEMA in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike, and the Houston newspaper had two stories on the front page: “Ike causes \$29 billion in damage” and “Treasury Secretary asks for \$700 billion to bail out banks”. A billion of anything hasn’t been the same for most of us, since that day. It is helpful to keep this understanding in mind, as we toss around trillion dollar war-budgets, trillion dollar bailouts and trillion dollar deficits.

It is easy to ignore the current state of affairs in national economies around the globe and how they impact America, especially if you rely upon American media as your source of news. Said media not only rarely reports on what is happening in other parts of the world, but when it does invariably it slants the coverage and uses code words for what is happening elsewhere, in order to better disguise the similarities between the faltering economies of America and other nations. Much has been made recently of the *austerity measures* that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and

World Bank require prior to lending to countries in trouble, but really that just means privatization and government spending cuts. Our own Congress appears bent on imposing austerity on America.

We are informed that the Federal Reserve will create US\$600 billion out of thin air over seven months and use it to 'keep interest rates low', a unilateral decision made without having any kind of public discussion of the ramifications of such a program (this is the reality of quantitative easing). We hear vague descriptions of some new kind of war, a *currency war*, yet we are so numb to war that we don't even care to understand what the term means. We are told that *core inflation* is low, not even 2%, and we are not to worry. Yet what does core inflation mean? It means prices for goods and services, excluding energy and food. For most Americans, gasoline, heating and cooling energy costs, and food make up the bulk of their discretionary spending. When we factor in the rise in prices in these areas of the economy, we find inflation is running (2011) about 8.5%. The government stopped publishing figures about the amount of money in the system several years ago, but economists can piece together the information from multiple sources; they report that the amount of money available has increased at over 13% per year since 2007. Some would call *that* inflation, as

more money chasing after the same amount of goods bids up prices.

If you do have access to international sources, you may know this: Thailand is spearheading a movement to get ASEAN¹⁵ nations to trade among themselves using the Chinese [RMB](#) for settlement. The latest proposal in talks aimed at changing the paradigm that has the [American dollar](#) as the worldwide foundation of trade, this one has a good chance of working, in part because China has already begun to negotiate individual deals with other nations; agreements that ignore the dollar. Couple this with the new tax in Thailand on stock dividends and interest paid to foreigners, instituted to deal with the falling value of the dollar, and we are given a few clues as to what this talk of *currency wars* means.

Please understand also, that economic concepts are murky at best, and there are no widely accepted “laws” or absolutes that explain behaviors and results to everyone’s satisfaction. It is an art, not a science, in other words. Economists are one group of experts that rarely agree on anything. We see talking heads constantly trying to parse the latest developments, and predict a future that has a reasonable chance of being accurate, while espousing viewpoints from opposite ends of the spectrum. There are always surprises and unintended

¹⁵ Association of South East Asian Nations, 23 countries that share trade and defense agreements

consequences, it seems, that derail even the most erudite spokesperson. What is a layperson to do? How can we begin to get our minds around today's global economic crisis? What can we do, and what does it all mean?

Let's look first at the [US dollar](#) and its international role. Late in [World War II](#), the allied nations effectively decreed that the dollar would be used to settle trade in the world economy that would result following their impending victory. In particular, it was clear that dollars would be the only currency allowed for the purchase of oil. A primary impact of this decision is that nations desiring to import oil must have US dollars available for that purchase. They must manage their exports so that they receive dollars as payment. All nations except [the US](#), that is. The US can just 'print' the dollars it needs, so it doesn't need to manage its trade as tightly. In China, the nation with the most export to the US, companies like Wal-Mart pay for Chinese goods using dollars. The company receiving the dollars turns them in at the local bank for the [Chinese currency](#) it needs to function within its own national economy, and the local bank in turn exchanges the dollars for RMB at the [Chinese Central Bank](#). The Central Bank holds the dollars, literally hundreds of billions of them each year, because to spend them, to set them free into the global economy and thereby increase their supply,

is to weaken the value each one represents. Spending them would cause inflation, in other words. As long as China acts to constrain the money supply, it is boosting the value of every dollar already circulating. Should we depend on China to keep the value of our own currency high?

China can't, however, hold the dollars indefinitely. Its conundrum is how to best spend that money, always with an eye on maintaining its value. Its solution in recent decades has been to spend dollars to buy [US debt](#), treasury bonds, IOUs that our federal government issues in order to borrow the money needed to cover our shortfall in revenue collection. This is the foundation of the circular logic that is boiled down in the idea: China funds US consumption by lending us the money we need to buy its products. China sees this use of its dollar holdings as beneficial because, if dollars spent anywhere are to have as small an impact as possible on the value of *all* dollars, then putting the money to work within the world's largest national economy is most likely to achieve their goal. "Put the fish into the biggest pond, so they can hide more easily." It is an admirable strategy, except for where it leads: An ever-increasing amount of US tax revenues are being paid to China, as interest, in its role as our lender. This is money that feeds their economy, not ours. It is money, representing our own workers' labor, going to China and not to your local

neighborhood or community. It is money that builds their infrastructure, not ours. It is money that creates their jobs, not ours. In effect, we are becoming increasingly indentured to China, slaves if you will.

China also finds itself in the role of lender, needing to evaluate each loan transaction in light of the borrower's ability to service the debt, pay interest, and to eventually repay the loan altogether. Of course, lenders don't want to loan \$1,000 today, if it is clear that by the time the borrower repays the \$1,000, inflation will have lowered the value of that amount of money significantly, or even catastrophically. Their calculation of the likelihood of this erosion in real purchasing power is what determines the interest rate they demand for the use of their capital. If they consider the risk is high, they will only lend if the interest rate is high. Does it surprise you to know that China has been buying fewer US treasury bonds lately? In late 2009, when President Obama made his first visit to China following his election, he was pressured to explain how the US intended to fund its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; China was concerned about the US just 'printing' money for these efforts, and thereby lowering the real value of the money we use to repay our debts, and of the money they already hold.

This concept is key: what happens when borrowers can't find someone willing to loan them money for low interest rates? They

offer to pay more in interest, until finally a lender decides that the now-higher rate is consistent with the risk the borrower poses, and makes the loan. If the US government offers bonds at the current, very low interest rates, and no one buys them, it is clear that they would have to increase the interest rates to find buyers for the bonds. Raising those rates would also raise interest rates charged on most loans within the US, including adjustable-rate mortgages and credit cards. As citizens are required to spend more to pay interest on their existing debt, they are unable to consume other goods and services, and our economy shrinks. Don't forget, since 1970, real wages, adjusted for inflation, have fallen more than 30%; borrowing and multiple-income households have been the only way that this fact has been hidden from sight¹⁶. Total debt in America, personal, corporate and sovereign, has doubled five times in the last four decades. It was just above \$50 trillion in 2010. For the past growth rate to continue, it must double again by 2020, yet doubling the debt also means doubling pollution, doubling resource extraction, doubling energy use, and

¹⁶ And have business profits also fallen during this time period? No. In fact, the total corporate profit rose above US\$1 trillion for the first time in 2002, and has only risen. In 2009, still deep within the collapse, profits reached new record levels, nearly US\$1.7 trillion, primarily because of increased worker productivity (more work for less pay) and lay-offs that trimmed payroll costs.

doubling consumption, too. That's not possible!

Spending more on interest also means more unemployment, fewer dollars available to chase goods, an increasing need for government assistance to the poor and unemployed, and a greater need to borrow from lenders who are increasingly worried about our ability to repay and therefore demand higher interest... You get the point: this is a spiral that leads to no good ending anytime soon. Yet this is precisely why we find ourselves 3 years into this current, deep collapse (let's not get sidetracked into determining which technical term: depression, recession or recovery, best describes our current situation) with no end in sight. So now, in steps the Federal Reserve, using the last tool in their toolbox in an attempt to keep the economy from circling the drain the final few times. We are told that they will buy up bonds over several months in order 'to keep interest rates down'. This is in fact, true. If they do not purchase the bonds, the US government will have to offer higher rates in order to find buyers. The Federal Reserve becomes the 'buyer of last resort' in other words, buying in order to keep rates low for all of us. We should celebrate this, except for the fact that the Fed doesn't have \$600 billion in a vault somewhere, aching to be spent. Instead, as is normal for our current fiscal paradigm, they will use a few computer keystrokes and the

money will magically appear in the government's bank account¹⁷. The promise to repay the loan at some future date is all that is needed to 'create' the money. But this has the obvious, and previously mentioned, affect of making all dollars worth just a little bit less by increasing the supply. What are the immediate impacts of this? You are already seeing them, in the rise in the price of gasoline. Since dollars are the mandated currency for buying oil, and the oil producers know that the dollar is worth less today than it was yesterday, they demand more dollars for every purchase in order to come out even.

Another way we can see this is with Thailand's new tax on dividends and interest earned by foreign investors. Because interest is remaining low in the US, money seeking higher returns must go elsewhere. Thailand is seeing more and more money flow into its stock market from outside the country. The foreign money is buying local assets and buying stocks, and driving up the price of both. This has the unintended consequence of making it harder for Thai people to invest (or in many cases, even survive) due to the higher asset prices, and it also sets in place the fear that when the situation changes somewhere else, the money will suddenly flee the Thai market and chase after even higher return elsewhere. This could end up devastating the economy in Thailand, as

¹⁷ There will be more about how money is created in today's system in the next section.

assets are liquidated and prices fall, and the government sees placing a tax on profits as a way to make foreign investment less attractive. Imagine, they are actually trying to keep American investment out of their country! Not to mention, as the dollar falls in value, the Thai currency, the baht, becomes stronger and this increases the costs of their exports, damaging their export market today. These last two issues, money that is chasing return and export difficulties, are the core drivers of what the US media terms 'currency wars'. As the dollar becomes weaker, every other country finds they must export more in order to have enough dollars to buy oil; at the same time as their own currency strengthens and becomes less able to compete in the export market. This is fueling the outcry around the world since the Federal Reserve's quantitative easing announcement.

Many European countries have already begun 'austerity measures'. Really what they are doing is deficit-reduction and privatization, to use the phrases common in American political discourse. Budgets are being slashed, in order to avoid borrowing on the scale we see here in America. Those governments are unwilling or unable to borrow the vast sums needed to allow continued spending beyond their income, and their only alternatives are raising taxes or cutting spending. Apparently, feeling averse to paying for the goods and services

provided by the government is a human condition, not just an American one. Since raising taxes to pay for services the taxpayers demand is out of the question, slashing costs is the only remaining choice they have. Witness the increasingly violent demonstrations in developed countries as welfare programs are dissolved, education costs rise, and government jobs evaporate. Remember the food riots of 2008 as drought ate into food stocks in developing countries while at the same time the price of oil rose dramatically, and food prices soared? Oh, that's right, we don't hear much about protests that happen outside the US, and even when we do, it's a 12-second sound bite on the news show or a three paragraph story on page 27 of the local newspaper, never enough to bring home the horror and tragedy of the economic travails of others. (To explain: September 29, 2010 saw millions of people protesting austerity in nearly every European country, yet we heard nothing about it here. In early November that year, clashes between protestors and police in the UK, over cuts in government funding of education, turned violent. Throughout the first half of 2011 large demonstrations continued in most European countries, protesting the war in Libya as well as these economic issues.)

Here in America, we may finally begin to have a discussion about this, hence my desire to help people understand the landscape that

will frame the discussion. Several commissions are attempting to point the way out of the morass we call a tax system. As none of them have the power to enact change by themselves, they can only release the 'terms of discussion' that may or may not lead to radical, fundamental change. Why might fundamental change, not just another tax reform package like what we've seen in recent years, be necessary? In our current budget, military spending, interest on the national debt, Social Security and Medicare are all considered by politicians to be sacred cows; in other words, untouchable when spending cuts are being considered. Yet these programs constitute 88% of our spending, meaning that even if we cut *every other government program*, we would save a mere 12% of spending. Imagine, no more Justice Department or Supreme Court, no more Congress (OK, that might be a good thing!), no more FDA, FCC, education spending, EPA, you see the point. Second, why is cutting 12% not enough? It's because today we borrow 42% of what we spend. That's right, the federal government's income is only 58% of spending. And since we don't control the decision to change the interest payments on the national debt, short of deciding to allow our debt to go into default, that particular 28% of the budget is truly untouchable. Equal reductions to the budgets of all other government programs, aside from interest payments, would amount

to cutting every department budget by 58%. Across the board means: military budget? Cut by 58%. Social Security disbursements? Cut by 58%. EPA budget? Cut by 58%. That is what it would take to get to a balanced budget, without raising taxes. Frankly, I find it nearly impossible to see how we can get to a balanced budget anytime soon; we need to look at what happens as we continue to borrow, and that is what scares me most. While we spend more than \$1.5 trillion each year that we don't have, Congress debates whether to cut \$30 or \$40 billion as if that makes a difference. Remember the difference between a billion and a trillion?

At some point, and I am no more able to say how close that point is than you are, the government has to borrow so much, the Federal Reserve creates so much money out of thin air, that we enter a spiral known as hyperinflation. It begins with costs rising 30% a year, then 30% a month, and in the blink of an eye, people begin to use the paper bills to clean up after using the toilet, literally. There are historical examples of this, throughout modern history: stories of people paying for their meal before they sit down, because it will cost more by the time they finish eating. Or, people using wheelbarrows to bring along the paper money needed to buy this day's food. Or, governments printing one-million-dollar bills. I had one of those when I was a kid, although then it was play money; it was hard

to get my mind around a nine-digit figure back then. Unlucky me, that bill was as worthless then as it would be today, if things come to that.

One more point that I feel needs to be in the mix: government spending today; federal, state and local, makes up 45% of America's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the measure of the output of the economy. Health care makes up another 20%. This means that all the other businesses make up just one-third of our economy. And as anyone who has experienced a bonus plan at work knows, what you measure is what you get. Our formula for GDP includes costs for cleaning up after the oil spill, but there is no subtraction for the loss of wildlife, wetlands, or jobs that resulted as a consequence of the spill. It counts the cost of payroll at your work, but not the value provided by a mother who cares for her young children at home. It counts the cost when an oil company buys and imports petroleum from a country that funds terrorism, and it counts the cost of the security personnel that fight that terrorism. It counts the salaries of law enforcement officers to arrest drug users, and of the guards in the prisons those unfortunate people are sent to. You can clearly see that what GDP does *not* measure is our quality of life. It does not indicate if we might have better lifestyles if we were to stop sending

US\$1.2 billion dollars a day overseas¹⁸, never to return, for oil. It does not measure the improvement in our well being when a family member or neighbor cares for us when we are ill. It does not account for the loss to society of productive individuals, nor of the devastating impact their incarceration (for what is truly a medical issue that cries out for treatment and rehabilitation, not jail time) has on their family. It does not track the improvement in our society when a bright child from an inner city ghetto gets the opportunity to attend college, the first in his family tree to do so. It does not measure the loss to society when someone has no health care insurance, and dies prematurely and unnecessarily because they knew they couldn't afford the emergency room and stayed home.

As a culture, and as a supposedly caring society, we need to have a frank discussion about what we desire from our selves, from our neighbors, and from our government. We cannot continue indefinitely, this paradigm of expecting lower taxes while at the same time, increasing government spending. The US Post Office, not a department of government but still required to get government approval for business decisions, just announced 2010 losses of over \$8 billion. Its operational loss was just under \$3 billion, which it blames on the increased

¹⁸ That is the cost of our petroleum imports when oil is selling for US\$100 per barrel.

use of email and the decrease in the number of businesses mailing wither catalogs or ads¹⁹. It has requested an increase in the cost of postage, to raise its revenue in order to balance its budget, and Congress denied it. It requested to be able to close on Saturdays, to cut costs in order to balance its budget, and Congress rejected that idea, too. This is symptomatic of how our government works today. The politicians offer “cutting waste” as the sum total of their ideas for reducing the deficit, closing the gap between revenue and expense. Most reasonable estimates of the savings from cutting waste put the figure at about 5%. Good if we will do it, but far short of what is needed. Raising taxes can’t even be discussed: enough legislators simply hold their breath until that idea gets tabled. Our only option is to borrow at the federal level, decimate our schools and programs that assist the increasing numbers of people in poverty at the state level, and close our parks and our homeless shelters at the local level²⁰.

Can we decide, as a society, that we stand for certain values? For example: a person who works what we determine to be a “full-time” job must earn enough to support a

¹⁹ The other \$5 billion + of losses resulted from the pension contributions for USPS employees that were required to be made per their contract.

²⁰ Remember, a large portion of the homeless population are folks that were, or should be, cared for in mental health facilities; the hospitals were mostly closed decades ago, and the patients were pushed out onto the street to fend for themselves.

family. Our children need to be educated. Someone who is ill needs medical attention so that they don't spread a communicable disease or die from neglect or the inability to pay. None of these issues are adequately addressed by our current financial system, a system that values corporate profits above Nature and above human life. The focus of our discussion has to be on these issues. Can we bring democracy to the workplace: allowing workers to control what is made, when and where it is made, and what is done with the profits? By making decisions on the site where the work, and possibly the damage, is done, we find that we care about what happens as a result of those decisions, and we tend to make decisions that support the environment and our neighbors. Decisions made far away, by people unattached to the outcome, tend to favor profit over people. Who says democracy, everyone having a say in collective decisions, can only operate in politics, but not in economics? Isn't the wellbeing of our community, a better future for our grandchildren, and a beautiful, sustainable local ecology the profit we truly seek through our work? For business, and therefore society, to survive and prosper, we can only raise revenue, cut costs, or borrow. Today we refuse to raise revenue, we reject cutting costs, and we don't understand the implications that arise from borrowing. This is a recipe for disaster of *Titanic* proportions.

Say, can you move that chair, the one right next to you, right over here by me?

Money As Debt

A major step towards reforming our economy must correct the dysfunctional aspects of the current system. Do you know how money comes into existence? Or how the money supply is increased? And what are the unexpected results of how we currently operate?

Many people believe that the Federal Reserve (commonly referred to as “the Fed”) is a department within the national government. It is not; it is a private bank. When it needs to *print* paper currency, dollar bills, it does use the government's printing press²¹. But it buys the bills from the federal printer for the cost of printing, and then loans them to other banks or to the government itself. When taxpayers were bailing out the financial system in 2007 and 2008 to the tune of a few trillion dollars, the Fed was placing the funds into the government's accounts in return for an IOU that requires the government to pay interest to service the debt. The US borrowed the money from the Fed, in other words. If you are at all familiar with credit and borrowing,

²¹ Actually, paper money accounts for about 3% of the total supply, and actual coins less than 1%. The rest of the *money* is just electronic entries in computers.

you know two aspects of this situation that may already be troubling you:

1. by the time loans are repaid, after years of interest charges, the total amount repaid far exceeds the original loan amount, and
2. at some point, the borrower has borrowed so much that no one is willing to risk lending any more to them.

But here's another troubling aspect that not too many people understand: in our current economic system, which by the way, we have only been using since 1913, money is created out of thin air when banks loan money to borrowers. We tend to think life is like that depicted in the movie “*It’s a Wonderful Life*”, with Jimmy Stewart telling the townspeople that their money “isn’t in the bank, it is in your neighbor’s house, or invested in the business down the street”. Our common sense tells us that when we approach the local bank and ask for a loan to buy a car or a home, the bank has money sitting in a vault somewhere, decides we are credit worthy, and gives some of it to us. It turns out, this is wrong. Our system operates under this premise: no debt, no money.

Our system, referred to as the *fractional reserve* system, evolved from the business practices of goldsmiths during the 1700s and 1800s. Often, the goldsmith was the only person in town who had a safe secure enough to store gold. You can easily imagine how

difficult it was to use gold as your currency for trade; it was heavy, it was hard to make change, and it exposed the person carrying it to risk: risk of theft and risk of injury during robbery. Goldsmiths began to issue receipts for the gold that people gave them to store within the secure confines of their safes. At any time, the holder of a receipt could turn it in and get back their gold.

The goldsmiths quickly discovered that only a fraction of the people ever returned for their gold. They traded the receipts, leaving the gold tucked away inside the goldsmith's safe. This meant that the goldsmith could issue receipts for more gold than they actually held in their safe, thereby *creating* money. Today's banks are allowed to use the same principle. While we may believe that when the bank loans us \$30,000 to buy a new car that the money would otherwise be sitting in a vault somewhere gathering dust, in truth the bank has less than 10% (sometimes, only 3%) of the money that it lends to us. The remainder is merely an accounting entry into our account, predicated on our signed agreement to repay the borrowed funds with interest.

This poses several problems for us. For one, the argument in favor of charging not only interest, but also *high rates* of interest (credit cards today may carry interest as high as 30% per year) is based on the notion that when the bank lends money it forgoes the use of that money and the return it would

otherwise have if that money were to be invested. This is not the case, if the bank is only conjuring money out of thin air and allowing you to spend what the bank didn't have in the first place. A bank that has 9% of what it lends you and charges you 30% interest, is making back its investment and has been made whole *within the first four months of the loan*.

Here's another problem: the money created by this process does not create the money required for the interest the borrower must pay. There are only two ways that the money to cover the interest portion of the repayment can be introduced into the system:

1. There must be loan defaults; some amount of assets must be repossessed and resold by the bank after some payments have been made by the borrower, or
2. New loans must constantly be made.

Are we happy with a system that requires either a certain amount of failure, the first way the money to repay interest is created, or one that is based on what is commonly referred to as a *Ponzi scheme*, a system that requires an ever-increasing influx of capital to make the earlier participants whole? We saw what happens (in 2008) when the banks realize that they don't have enough assets to be making new loans: credit froze. As banks reassessed the value of their assets in a falling real estate market, they were unable

to make new loans, and there was not enough money in the system for everyone to continue repaying principal and interest for their loans. And as defaults increase, credit naturally shrinks, which means there is less money available to purchase goods and services, which leads to higher unemployment, and that causes more defaults, and we spiral ever-downward until something changes to increase the money supply. This is part of the reason the government was forced to inject so much capital into the banking system.

Yet another problem with this system relates directly to the federal government: the money, by some estimates more than \$2 trillion dollars directly funneled into financial institutions in 2008 and 2009 and another \$10 trillion spent in buying up toxic assets or guaranteeing loans made to large businesses like General Motors and AIG, was borrowed from the Federal Reserve. As we have seen, the Fed doesn't have trillions of dollars just lying around. When the US government needs to borrow money, the Fed makes an electronic entry and the government has money to spend. For doing this *service*, the Fed receives IOUs that generate interest income. As the government borrows money from the Fed, servicing that debt has grown to cost taxpayers nearly \$600 billion each year. No one expects, or budgets, to pay back the money borrowed in

the foreseeable future, and so we are saddling future generations with onerous interest payments for borrowing they had no part of.

We have also grown accustomed to hearing about the *business cycle*. As money flows through our current system, there are good times, when money is cheap (meaning that the rate of interest banks pay each other and the Fed for short, overnight loans to keep their assets balances adequate for lending purposes is low) and there are not-so-good times when money is expensive. By controlling the cost of money lent to banks, the Fed controls the amount of lending that can occur. If too much borrowing is happening, and too much money is chasing the limited supply of goods and services, prices begin to rise and that can lead to what is commonly called *inflation*. The Fed is dedicated to fighting inflation, claiming that a 3% annual rise in prices is acceptable. In fact, *some* growth is not only considered desirable, but also necessary. The economy is so intensely focused on growth, that there is no agreeable word to describe an economy that is getting smaller; in the event that an economist has to refer to such an event; they refer to it as *negative growth*. What's wrong with depending upon the economy to always grow? We live on a finite planet with finite resources, and we cannot continue to grow forever. There has to be a point where our economy not only stops growing, but

shrinks. And if the economy is being measured primarily by GDP, then as the working population shrinks due to the retirement of the Boomer generation (people born between 1946 and 1964), the remaining workers must produce ever more just to maintain the pace of growth.

The cycles of boom and bust, of lending followed by repossession or bankruptcy, are seen as inevitable. Yet they are mere byproducts of the control over the money supply vested in the Fed and the fractional reserve system that allows banks to lend. If banks did what the average citizen believes, lending only money that has been placed in the vaults by depositors, banks would not have the liquidity issues that brought our system near to collapse in the recent sub-prime mortgage crisis. If lending was not the linchpin in our system as the driver that creates our money supply, if money was created because of the value of work able to be performed by all available workers, we would not be dependent on the business cycle to rebalance the amount of money available to citizens. We would not require a recession every decade to artificially constrict the money supply.

So how can we address these issues? Before I lay out a plan, I ask that you suspend any tendency to reject, out-of-hand, ideas that seem initially to be preposterous. I ask this of you for one simple reason: the plan has been tried and proven on numerous

occasions throughout history and around the world, but our lack of sound financial education has prevented us from being aware of this fact.

Some people feel we should return to a currency that is backed by something tangible, gold or silver for instance. We have enough experience with this method to see some of its pitfalls. We find that the underlying metal itself is subject to price volatility and manipulation, and that means it isn't stable enough to lend any *consistent* worth or value to paper money or to be used as a yardstick to price goods. Too often in the past, metals have been subject to groups or individuals hoarding supply or trying to corner the market. There are many other uses for metals as well, that can impact supply and demand. There is a finite amount of metals, and this effectively limits the size of an economy. If the population increases but the money supply cannot, then every worker gets a smaller share of the available money, regardless of their productivity. In the mid-1700s, the American colonies used a fiat money, Continentals. Because no tangible asset backed this currency, the Colonial government printed Continentals as needed to fund their budget. This spending created services and infrastructure, *jobs in other words*, and so there was no inflation, and everyone who wanted work could find it. Benjamin Franklin traveled to England, and was appalled at the sight of homeless beggars

on nearly every street corner. The economy was stagnant; jobs were in very limited supply and consequently paid very little. He was asked how the colonies managed to maintain such a robust economy, and he explained about the system of using Continentals to fund the creation of enough jobs for everyone. The English reacted by passing the Currency Act, which required that no other currency could be used in the colonies, and that the King's tax must be paid in gold. Because the colonies had a limited supply of gold, and that had to be managed to enable them to have the funds to meet the King's tax, very little gold was available for trade or wages. Suddenly America became like England, with very few jobs, low wages, and lots of homeless and starving people. It was impossible to expand the economy because of the constraints of the limited supply of gold. We would suffer from similar constraints today, if we revert to a currency backed by gold.

Next, let's step back into history, specifically to 1860, as Abraham Lincoln is elected to be the first Republican President of the United States. The Republican Party had been created a few years before, in Kansas, to prevent the importation of slavery into that state. The party platform included promising homesteads to farmers and emphasized improving education and fostering industry and railroads. It also proclaimed that free market labor was

superior to slave labor. Lincoln faced issues far beyond the one of slavery he is most identified with today. Indeed, in his first days in office, the federal government hung on the brink of bankruptcy. Congress didn't even have the funds to pay itself its salary. Yet by the time he was assassinated in 1865, his administration had formed and equipped the largest army in the world at the time, freed 4 million slaves, and launched this nation as the greatest industrial giant the world had ever seen. A continent-spanning railroad was constructed, the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Mines were created, higher education developed with the founding of the Land Grant College System, the Homestead Act was passed, beginning the flood of colonization into the Western states, and worker productivity increased by more than 50%. How did he manage to take a bankrupt government to such heights of accomplishment?

He created a monetary system referred to as *Greenbacks*. This was a paper currency, issued by the government in much the same way as the Fed creates money today, just by printing it. It used man-hours rather than gold as its basis. A quote from Lincoln is insightful, "*The wages of men should be recognized as more important than the wages of money.*" Using about \$400 million in Greenbacks to pay the Northern soldiers fighting the Civil War, that money flowed

into the economic system and circulated as a measure of the value of labor and goods. Because it was not borrowed from outside the federal government, there was no interest to pay, interest that would have totaled 10 times the borrowed amount, or \$4 billion, by the time it could have been paid off. It also put these funds into play without taxing the population. Lincoln's economic advisor, Henry Carey, understood well the lessons of the American Revolution, when the fledgling country used a fiat currency to fund its war of independence from the official banker of the Colonies, the King of England. Using the Greenback to fund government payrolls and other spending, Lincoln enjoyed the prosperity that capital generates when it moves throughout a system without having to generate profits for a few from the labor of many. No one was shorted or cheated by this, banks continued to loan money and collect deposits, they just didn't loan to the government anymore.

In a famous editorial in the "*Times of London*" newspaper, note the blunt opinion outside the U.S. concerning the creation of Greenbacks:

"It [America] will pay off debts and be without debt. It will have all the money necessary to carry on its commerce. It will become prosperous without precedent in the history of the world. The brains, and wealth of all countries will go to North America.

That country must be destroyed or it will destroy every monarchy on the globe.”

While some have questioned whether Lincoln’s policy of printing money without any tangible backing caused inflation, it is clear that during wartime, severe shortages occur and that is what drives up prices. Thomas Edison was quoted in an interview in 1921,

“If the nation can issue a dollar bond, it can issue a dollar bill.... The difference between a bond and a bill is that the bond lets the money broker collect twice: the amount of the bond and interest as well.... Currency pays nobody but those who contribute in some useful way. It is absurd to say our country can issue bonds but not currency. Both are promises to pay, but one fattens the usurer and the other helps the People.”

The Constitution grants the government the right “to coin money”. Long ago we delegated that right to the private Federal Reserve System, retaining only the task of minting coinage within the purview of the government itself. As we have seen, however, the modern banking system collects interest for the use of money that is created out of thin air. There are no shareholders, or owners, or even depositors who have let their reserves of cash be used by others and need to be compensated. It is simply an entry in

the ledger that creates the money. The banks have no claim to interest, and even less claim to interest charged at rates of 18%, 21% and in some cases, 30% per year.

But can this idea work today, in our modern world? It already is, within the economic system of China. Shortly after Congress agreed to the \$700 billion bailout requested by Treasury Secretary Paulson, China announced its own, a nearly \$600 billion bailout. There were two primary differences between these bailouts. First, China didn't have to borrow the money, so \$600 billion is the end of it, they won't be paying interest for the rest of time because of this spending. Secondly, they issued over half of the funds in the form of certificates redeemable for Chinese manufactured goods, especially home appliances. Imagine that suddenly there is \$300 billion flooding into the retail market, earmarked for refrigerators, washers and dryers, air conditioners, or computers at a time when less than half the population has these items? There is the initial sales increase, and then the wages paid to workers to manufacture the items, then the added spending those workers now undertake since they have better jobs, etc. The other half of the Chinese bailout is funding infrastructure improvements, much as the New Deal of President Roosevelt helped put over 11 million unemployed people back to work in the U.S. following the Depression of the

1930's. Again, however, Roosevelt borrowed the money and began what is now a national debt that far exceeds our ability to repay.

“With computerization, robotics, advances in genetics and food growing, we have the potential to turn the planet into a sustainable ecosystem capable of supporting all. This is not a time to be saddled with an 18th century money system designed around the endless rape of the planet, or based on the robber baron mentality and flawed with Unrepayable Debt. *A new monetary system with enough government control to ensure funding of vital issues could unlock the creative potential of the entire nation.*”
Roger Langrick, Canadian money reform advocate

Actually, Mr. Langrick is wrong. Such a change in our monetary system could unlock the creative potential of the *entire world*. Let's look in detail at this idea. The proposal is this: that the Congress take back the right to *coin money*, as already granted by the Constitution. The Federal Reserve can either be disbanded, or can be absorbed into the federal government structure, becoming a function of the Treasury Department, or can function as any normal but private bank. This is what most

Americans believe is the case, mistakenly, already. An independent audit of all banks, including those that make up the Federal Reserve System, might find that the entire system is bankrupt anyway, due to the current state of the credit default swaps and derivatives markets. Under the concept of *too big to fail* and the coverage extended by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), banks would be placed into federal receivership if this turns out to be true.

There are several advantages to this approach. For one, it would actually increase the transparency and accountability of the economic engine. Today, people around the world wait with bated breath as the Fed convenes its regular meetings, and makes pronouncements bearing on the strength or weakness of the economy and what the Fed intends to do to manipulate the situation. It is always unclear, although the Fed expresses the desire to benefit the people, who actually sets the goals the Fed is striving to achieve when it adjusts interest rates, and who ultimately benefits. The Fed is a private, for-profit entity that profits from loaning the U.S. government money that it doesn't have to begin with, money conjured out of thin air.

No one votes for the members of the Fed, although the President appoints the Chairman of the Fed. We have been taught to believe that there is an unavoidable business cycle inherent in our system. Money

becomes plentiful, lots of loans are made, the new money buys goods and services and life seems good. But eventually there is too much money in the system, and by raising interest rates and making new loans difficult, people experience problems, jobs are lost, loans go into default and foreclosure, homes revert to the banks that offered the loans originally (to be resold for profit by the bank while it creates new money by making a new loan to the new buyer) and the process begins again. If however, interest was a fixed (and not usurious) amount, and the creation of new money was constrained instead by other limits, no such business cycle is required to allow the economy to function. Everyone would know what limits are in place, what to expect, and we could plan our business and personal lives accordingly. The limits would be set by lawmakers in public debate, as now occurs within our democracy. And ultimately, if we are unhappy with how the process is being administered, we can vote the rascals out!

Many people express the feeling that the government is not to be trusted. They feel the government is not responsive to the people, and usually have a valid reason for feeling this way. We will look at some ideas to help alleviate these misgivings shortly, but first, let's look at them within this particular context. If we leave the system working as it does today, we allow big business (large,

often multinational, corporations and monopolies) to:

- buy competitors, the media and even the government itself. Corporate and political action committee (PAC) campaign contributions dwarf the contributions made by individuals to political candidates²²
- lend money to consumers, often at high interest rates, and quickly foreclose on property when loan repayments are late. The consumer loses whatever payments have already been made, counts his or herself lucky if they can avoid paying an income tax on the cancelled debt, and the company or bank gains possession of an asset that it can now resell
- control who can or cannot apply for loans
- loan money to hedge funds, which manipulate all types of securities markets not only through tactics like short selling and volume trading, but by creating new products like credit default swaps and derivatives, which

²² In the 2008 election cycle, 80% of the campaign contributions came from business, not citizens. And this was before the Supreme Court ruling that grants corporations, by way of free speech, the right to spend as much as they desire to influence elections. In the 2010 mid-term elections, the two dominant parties spent just over US\$2 billion, while money from other sources, often undisclosed, spent nearly as much making this election the most expensive in US history.

few people understand or can adequately price or regulate

- loan money to consumers to enable the spending that grows the economy, without having to raise wages

On the other hand, we trust the government to:

- wage war
- keep us safe
- contribute to our general welfare through various public programs, ranging from building dams and roads, managing parks, to Social Security and Medicare.

Why won't we allow government to control the money supply? The current system allows a for-profit enterprise to print money at the people's expense. That isn't fair, that's greed. What *is* wrong with our system today is not that there is borrowing and lending, but that there is interest that benefits for-profit banks that gave up nothing of their own to earn it. It only makes sense to allow the government to bring transparency and accountability to this process.

So what are the mechanics of how this new system could work? Let's use the term *Greenbacks*, just because that is what was used before, during the Civil War, with such great success. For the purists among us, let's first commission an independent audit of banks today. Again, as we have seen, many if

not most are already bankrupt, and are staying in business using smoke and mirrors (and thanks to inadequate enforcement of existing banking laws). A few of the largest are so heavily invested in derivatives, that if that market collapses they will fall in a day. And just as a note of caution, since the collapse has not yet happened as this book is being written, the total derivatives market was valued at the end of 2009 at *six hundred trillion dollars* (Wikipedia), many, many times more than the entire money supply on Earth. There is no way that any bank will be bailed out if these bets fail. Any bank that fails the audit could be handled according to the rules of our current system, and placed under the control of the government. Some people object to nationalizing businesses, and the term *socialism* is considered to be a slur in many circles. But if you actually parse what happened during the bailouts of 2008 and 2009, where the government gave banks, other financial institutions, insurance companies and automakers money to stay solvent in return for some amount of stock and/or control, many businesses are at least partially nationalized today²³. In each case, the decision was deemed to be the most

²³ Consider that President Obama appointed a person to set (read: limit) the compensation plans for executives at many major financial institutions and auto manufacturers. He was forced to this extreme because the corporations were unable to restraint themselves from paying bonuses to executives from taxpayer-provided funds.

appropriate one to make at the time, either because the business was *too big to fail* or because the political and economic ramifications of bankruptcy were expected to be huge.

If you are old enough, you may remember the U.S. Postal Savings Service (USPSS). From 1911 to 1967, the USPSS, an agency of the government, provided banking and savings services. It had been established to encourage immigrants to stop holding their money under their mattress or in jars at home, had a low ceiling on the amount an account could hold, and paid a minimal amount of interest. The idea of the government holding the money felt more secure to many immigrants, who didn't trust banks, often because of bad experiences with them in their homeland or because of the difficulties with banks that occurred during the Great Depression. It was the bank failures in the 1930's that led to the creation of the FDIC, among many guarantees. The USPSS became unnecessary due to competition from banks, when banks raised interest above the rate being paid by USPSS, and people became confident that FDIC insurance would cover any losses resulting from a bank failure. This confidence has developed over time, as each year many (usually local) banks fail²⁴ and FDIC makes all depositors whole. If the government were

²⁴ In 2009, more than 120 banks, or 1 every 3 days, were taken over under current procedures

to take over banks that are insolvent, this would provide the infrastructure needed to revive the USPSS. Less than \$1 trillion would buy the *book value* of all U.S. banks today, the value of all their physical assets like land, buildings and office equipment, and less than \$2 trillion would buy all bank stock. If the government were to just convert a few of the larger bank networks, there would be enough facilities to enable every citizen access to deposit, checking, savings and loan services while minimizing for-profit lending in the system.

Another alternative can be glimpsed if we look at the only state-owned bank in America, the Bank of North Dakota. Created by a grassroots movement of farmers tired of seeing local farms being foreclosed upon by banks from out-of-state, it has allowed the North Dakota government to function with a surplus during the hard economic times of 2008 - 2009 when most states are suffering huge deficits. State funds are deposited in the bank, and the bank uses those funds (not under a fractional reserve model, but under the more traditional, dollar-for-dollar model) to make loans to citizens of the state and to underwrite municipal bonds for local projects. It has been pointed out that if California would set up its own state-run bank, pay 6% interest for savings deposits and charge just 8% for loans to its citizens, it would be able to *finance its entire budget from the profits and eliminate the state*

income tax. Would that make California more attractive for business investment?

The government, under the new system, would print the Greenbacks and begin to pay the interest and to redeem the bonds using the new currency. There would not need to be any adjustment in value, exchanges would be made dollar for dollar across the board. Interest would be paid in Greenbacks, and when the government needed to pay for any goods or services, Greenbacks would be used. The government could redeem all bonds as they come due, or in a better scenario, could redeem all of its IOUs immediately, thereby ending the tyranny of paying interest (currently over \$600 billion each year). There is no problem with either method; bondholders know they run the risk that any bond may be called early. It certainly would be helpful to our economy if we could eliminate the debt service we now endure.

To put this in perspective, let's look at 2005. That year, the *total federal income tax collected* was \$927 billion. (Look at how that compares with the figures being tossed about in 2008 and 2009 during the bailout) The interest on federal debt in 2005 was \$352 billion. The total assets in the form of bank credit equaled \$7.4 trillion. Interest on that debt, paid by citizens and corporations (assuming 5% average interest rate, actually lower than it would be in reality) equals \$370 billion dollars. If we

eliminate the national debt and the need to pay that interest, let interest from all the bank loans flow to the government after the banks have been declared insolvent, and assign half that interest received to cover the costs of maintaining bank branches around the country, the taxes needed for that year's federal spending would equal \$390 billion. The total money supply in 2005 was \$9.7 trillion. That means, if the government just printed the money needed instead of taxing individuals, the inflation rate would be 4%, less than the money supply grew in 2006!²⁵

Also in 2005, America's Gross Domestic Product, the output of our economy, was \$12.5 trillion, but 12% of the population was not working, either receiving unemployment benefits, long out of work, or under employed (working part time, not full time and not by choice). If we had enjoyed full employment the government could have spent \$1.4 trillion in *new money* to pay the unemployed to work on new public projects without increasing price inflation. Using government spending to ensure full employment means that more money is available to purchase goods and services. As long as new money creates demand, it does not create price inflation. Also, according to

²⁵ Even though the Fed no longer releases the M3 measure of the total money supply, economists compiling figures from various sources reported an unofficial result for 2006 that shows the supply increased 13%.

the UN, \$80 billion would be enough to cut worldwide poverty and hunger in half, achieve universal primary school education, cut the under 5-year old death rate by 2/3, cut maternal death in childbirth by 3/4, begin to reduce HIV/Aids and gain access to clean water for half the 1.2 billion who currently lack it. Wow. Add to that the concept, which the U.S. actually has been trying to act upon in recent years but can't get agreement from the banks, of forgiving Third World debt so that developing countries can spend their money on their own people instead of debt service, and we begin to rehabilitate the perception of America around the world. Imagine doing all of this **and** having no income tax at the same time! A 1997 UN report stated that if relieved of annual debt and interest repayments, the money freed up in Africa alone would save the lives of 21 million children and provide basic education to 90 million women and girls *in the first 2 years*. None of the Third World debt, totaling \$2.2 trillion now, began life as real money owed to anyone. It was brought into existence out of thin air. No one loses anything by taking it off the books. Let the banks carry a permanent account in the amount of the debt forgiven, so that they don't see their assets reduced impacting their ability to lend new money to others. Or as we are offering in this paradigm shift, get the banks out of lending altogether.

Since some of the money could be spent in ways that generate income: credit that returns interest, housing projects that collect rent, purchasing existing adjustable rate mortgages that are set to adjust upward and freezing the rate at the initial low level while collecting the interest on behalf of the people, there would actually be more money available for the government to spend on new projects. There is a great need right now for the government to fund projects relating to the climate crisis, for example. One program could offer to pay the wages of the installers for any solar or building insulation project, residential or business. Or the government might want to remove some money supply and lower inflation even further. If funds are used to put unemployed people to work in a full-employment program that creates new products and services, inflation will not be a factor even if the government does print more money. Demand increases as supply increases; therefore there is no inflation, and no business boom or bust cycle to ravage individual lives.

Now let's go back to something mentioned in the example from 2005: government loans. If the government were to take over the banks, either through receivership of those that are insolvent, by buying up all their assets using Greenbacks, or by buying all their stock and becoming de facto owners, all loans would be

taken over at the same time. Subsequently, the interest being paid on the loans would come into the Treasury, instead of the banks. Loans could all be adjusted so that the universal interest rate charged is 5%. Part of the problem of for-profit banking is usury, charging excessive interest. Unfortunately, the very people who suffer the most from high interest rates, the poorer people of our country, are the very people who pay the highest interest rates. When interest rates are above 20%, and this is the case with many loans today, the borrower pays back the original loan amount several times over before the payment cycle is complete. Indeed, it is by charging interest rates that are exorbitant that some employers manage to keep slaves in debt bondage, never earning enough to overcome the compounded interest that accrues on what was, originally, a very small loan. People may express a concern that the poor are less likely to repay loans, yet the world's experience with micro-credit (small loans to poor people with minimal interest rates, especially to women in developing countries) has proven this fear to be unfounded.

Have you heard the story of how Mohammed Yunis got the idea for Grameen Bank, and the whole concept of micro-credit, which led to his receiving a

Nobel Prize in Economics? After returning to his home country, Bangladesh, carrying his new doctorate degree in economics from Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, he began to teach at a university. He found famine ravaging the countryside, and quickly realized that the economic theories he had learned did not address the issues that were causing the famine. He says, he used to dread going to his own lectures, because he knew what he was teaching did not apply to help his own countrymen and women. He felt called to do something to help *just* one person. He went into the shantytown near the school where he was teaching, and spoke with people there. He encountered a woman who made stools from bamboo. He asked her, "How much profit do you make from your work?" and she told him she made 2 cents everyday. Inquiring into how this much work could possibly generate just 2 cents a day, she told him that she had to borrow the money to buy the bamboo from a particular moneylender. The deal he offered, in exchange for the start-up capital each day, was that she had to sell him the stools she made, at a price that he set. Thus by being impoverished and without capital, she was virtually enslaved to someone who could *assist* her. This

distressed Yunis, and he sent students into the area to discover how many other people were operating under similar conditions with that particular moneylender. They found 42 people, who were borrowing a combined total of \$27 a day. Yunis reached into his own pocket and offered those 42 folks the \$27, without the restriction on how they earned their money. The woman who sold the stools for 2 cents a day was suddenly able to earn \$1.25 per day by selling her wares at the market price. Enough to set some aside for tomorrow's purchase of bamboo, she was liberated from the moneylender's cycle of dependence. This was the seed that later sprouted into the micro-credit boom that is transforming poverty around the world.

But here is the real takeaway from the story: when he is asked about what strategy he used to form his bank, he replies that he "didn't have a strategy. But when I look back, my strategy was to look at what banks would do, and then do the opposite. If banks lent to the rich, I lent to the poor. If banks lent only to men, I lent to women. If banks made large loans, I made small ones. If banks required collateral, mine were collateral-free. If the banks required lots of paperwork, I gave loans that were

illiterate-friendly. If you had to go to the bank to apply for the loan, my bank went to the borrowers. Whatever banks did, I did the opposite. I didn't have a plan, I just did whatever next step seemed appropriate." But in the end, he transformed economics. It should also give us warning, that if micro-credit begins to act more like a bank, it will lose the magic that makes it work so well. This is happening as scandals erupt in India, where "micro-credit" lenders have evolved to charge large amounts of interest on their loans, effectively replicating the moneylender crisis that sparked micro-finance in the first place. And the crux of the matter? Seeing people not as the problem, but instead seeing them as the solution.

The government has used Small Business Administration (SBA) to issue loans for years, allowing borrowers who would not otherwise qualify for loans from banks to obtain funding at below-market interest rates. These SBA loans are also made to citizens who have lost homes or businesses during natural disasters, and often have temporarily become unemployed due to the event and therefore fail to qualify for a *normal* loan. As we see the difference that is made in the lives of our neighbors from SBA

loans, and on the poverty-busting success of micro-credit, can we explore this avenue to overcome the many pockets of poverty and despair that exist today within our own nation?

There would still be a useful place for private banks, insurance companies, finance companies and broker/dealers that would be offering loans and making money by borrowing from the government at low rates, and lending that money out at higher rates. Many of us actually think this is how the system works already! The big difference under this new system is that we would be off of the fractional reserve system, which allows banks to lend money they don't have. After the switch to Greenbacks, only the government can lend and create new money. All private lenders would be subject to a 100% reserve requirement, meaning they had to be lending their own money. At last, the idea that interest is justified because of the risk of loss and the loss of use of money will be true.

If you are still concerned about the government taking over loan servicing, note that there is more money invested today in government bonds (\$12 trillion) than has been borrowed through bank loans (\$7.5 trillion). As the government bonds are redeemed, the investors will be looking for new ways to get that money earning interest, and banks could sell some of their loan

portfolio to individual investors, rather than let the interest flow into the Treasury.

When the government is the lender, it would continue to service the loans once they have been funded. The practice that has been developed only in recent years of bundling just a fraction of many assorted home loans into a *mortgage-backed security* will cease. In hindsight, many believe that this practice was a sly attempt to hide the many bad loans that were being issued. If the bank has issued a *no doc* loan, short for *no documentation* where very little is known about the borrower, and it tries to sell that loan in one piece to someone else (and avoid the risk of default) the buyer might ask hard questions about the borrower, questions the bank may be embarrassed or unable to answer. The *no doc* loan is just another example of how banks have gotten used to the idea that the government, or in other words: the taxpayers, will always make sure they are free of the risk of bankruptcy if they make bad loan decisions. There are countless cases where borrowers making \$35,000 a year, took out home loans of hundreds of thousands of dollars, just by signing an application that stated they made enough to handle the loan payments. I personally know of a loan made to someone who made \$37,000 a year as an auto mechanic and the loan amount was \$1.1 million. Borrowers justified this by assuming the price of the home would continue to rise, and their

income would also rise, and after a few years they could refinance into a new loan with lower interest rates and smaller payments. No one expected that home prices would fall. Banks had discovered a way to move the risk of default off their own shoulders onto someone else's, and used the creation of mortgage-backed securities as a way to prevent investors from being able to identify any particular loan. They happily collected their closing fees and doc fees and fees for originating the loans, fobbed the *toxic* loans on investors worldwide, then engaged in credit default swaps and derivative trading to bet against the likelihood of these loans being repaid. Thankfully, the new paradigm can be constructed to return us to lending sanity, to limit lending to those who qualify to accept the commitment of repayment, and to avoid the pitfalls and temptations that result from selling off loans to third parties.

When people think of the government running any project or performing any task, there is a fear that it will not be run well. Often, the state-run Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is thrown out as the prime example of government-controlled mayhem, at least in California. "Do you want your bank run like the DMV?" one might ask. Actually, no I don't. At least not like my own experiences at the local office, with its long lines. But the people who I have worked with at the DMV office know what they are doing, are pleasant, and always very helpful. Really,

it's not that the DMV is incapable of running smoothly, or is trying to make my life difficult, they simply seem to be understaffed so that I have to wait some amount of time for service. The staff is only enforcing regulations, not making them up as they go along. If I have an issue with how a situation is being handled, I can complain; to my legislator if I think the law is wrong, or to the manager of the center if I feel a staff person has provided me poor service. If enough people were available to help me without a long wait, I'd be perfectly happy. Herein lies the clue; government workers are just like you and I. They want to do a great job, but they don't set the budget. I don't want to learn everything about motor vehicle laws, so I depend on them to help me, and they do. If the government would approach the business of banking like any private bank would, and ensure that adequate attention is being paid to the front of the house, we will be unable to distinguish between a government-run bank and one that is privately operated.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tried an experiment, allowing subcontractors to operate part of its collections work. It quickly found that the subcontractors were less efficient and more costly than the IRS's own division had been, and canceled the contract. Perhaps because non-governmental entities are for profit it makes them less cost-effective. And we all know, in the case of

franchise businesses for example, that one branch of a business can run efficiently and with great customer service, while another branch could be shut down. Just being a function of government does not mean it is inherently inefficient.

The government would also be able to manage the banking system more efficiently under this new system, as there would only need to be one clearinghouse for all transactions. The need to *float* a check would go away; meaning as you make a deposit into your account, you don't have to wait for the various banks involved to transfer money back and forth to settle accounts; transactions would all clear the same business day. Losing this level of complexity would save much of the expense of handling the basic banking services. This utilizes technology to increase efficiency while lowering expense.

So what does this all mean for our future? How can or should we interpret our past, and how can we change our paradigm to achieve different results? Our economy will never be like it was in 2006, prior to the Great Recession. Problems such as the huge gap between the rich and the poor, the elevated levels of unemployment, the increasing levels of pollution and environmental destruction that seem inherent in the industrial capitalism of today; will not go away because we pass more regulations. In 2007, the

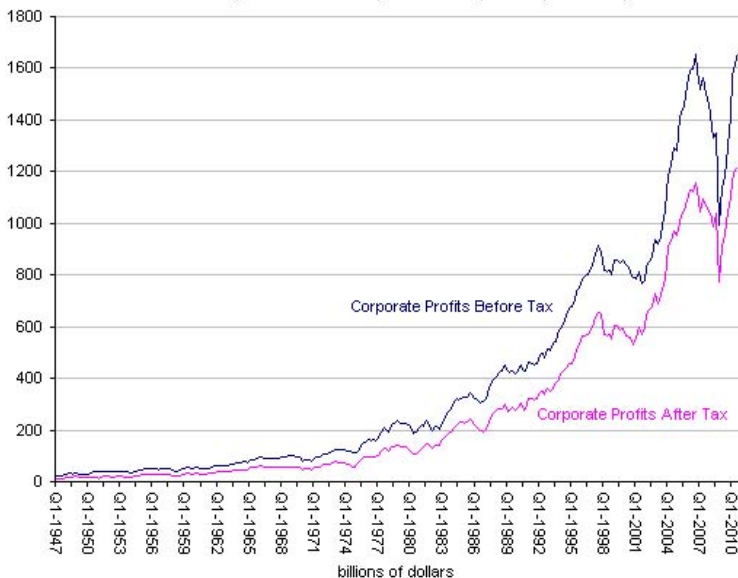
income reported by the top 1% of taxpayers amounted to over 23% of the total income that year. In 1960, the same group reported less than 10% of the total. The only other year in which these taxpayers reported a higher percentage of the total US income was in, drum roll please, 1928. Is it a coincidence, or is there a fundamental problem with too few people gathering too much money? An aside: the lower 50% of taxpayers did not report an aggregate total of 23%.

The sub-prime mortgage crisis is widely blamed for our economic troubles, but it was only a symptom of something bigger. It began in 2007, and the economy didn't *fail* until 2008. The failure was, in large part, brought on by the decrease in the book value of assets held by financial institutions due to falling home prices. But the Federal Reserve's decision to keep money cheap by maintaining a low interest rate for bank borrowing (which provoked the frenzy we saw in bankers to loan money for home purchasing), the creation of new monetary instruments such as mortgage-backed securities, credit default obligations, and derivatives, (which allowed banks to sell their *product*, debt, to naïve investors and lessened the need for them to qualify borrowers properly) the increasing trade deficit (especially with China), the falling value of the US dollar, and skyrocketing oil prices all shoulder a share of the blame as well. In the last five years, the financial

industry as whole accounts for over 40% of total corporate profit. Those profits topped US\$1 trillion for the first time in 2002 and in 2009, despite the poor economy, reached record levels of just under \$1.7 trillion.

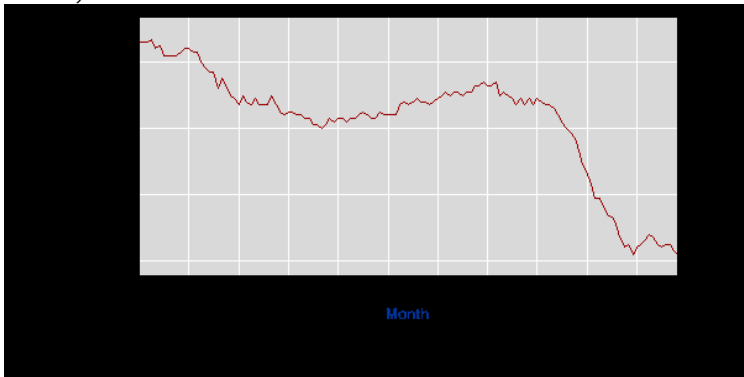
Corporate Profits

(seasonally-adjusted annual rates, billions of dollars;
with inventory valuation and capital consumption adjustments)

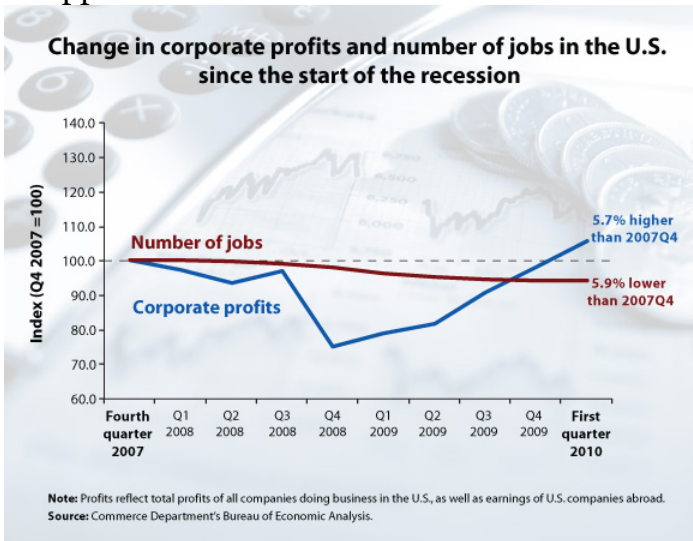


It is hard to agree with the assertion of certain politicians that lowering tax rates for the wealthy will spur job creation, when the record (graphed in the chart above) shows skyrocketing corporate profits at the same time as wages remain steady or even decline, and the numbers of people without work rise. In this table, which shows the percentage of Americans over the age of 16 who have some kind, any kind, of job has

fallen from 63% to 58% between 2008 and 2010, we see a decline in available work:



Now here's a table that shows that corporate profit has soared even as jobs disappear:



Much of the discussion about unemployment centers around the role globalization has played in moving

manufacturing jobs overseas. It is undeniable that this has happened: US manufacturing jobs as a percentage of all work has fallen from over 30% in the 1980s to less than 10% today. But outsourcing is not the sole driver of our job losses; robotics and computer technology have also contributed, as well as the development of our post-modern culture. I am old enough to remember filling my car's gas tank at a *service station*. People, usually in uniform and among many working at the facility, would pump the gas for me, clean my windshield, and offer to check my oil, air and fluid levels as part of my purchase. The station usually had mechanics able to diagnose and fix any mechanical issues I might be experiencing. Today, most of us use plastic to pay through the device mounted on the gasoline pump, and hardly even notice the sole person tucked behind the security of glass that might otherwise take our money. Few *gasoline stations* today have mechanics on duty, and most pay employees the minimum wage required by law. Your bank used to employ many tellers who could often call you by name even before they accessed your account; today most of us use online banking or ATM machines and don't even notice that bank counters are manned by one or two employees, not a dozen or more. If you have visited a modern factory recently, you were struck by how few people are needed to operate it. The handful of

employees that are onsite cluster in a control room, while robots do the repetitive work of manufacture and assembly without error or the need for health insurance and paid vacations. These jobs are not coming back. We say we are moving into the age of a service and information economy, but that is code for *fewer jobs that are location-specific*. Someone overseas can do it just as well, but also computers and robots are taking the place of live human beings in a myriad of activities that used to employ hundreds of thousands of people.

The 1970s saw the birth of an environmental movement that accomplished great things. Spurred by the widely-distributed photo of the Earth rising above the surface of the Moon, taken by Apollo 8 astronauts at Christmas, 1968, people understood the finite nature of our planet for the first time and chose to address our pressing pollution issues. We grasped that we could no longer treat the environment as unlimited; we passed laws to protect our air and water with dramatic results. Rivers that had been so polluted that they actually burned, were restored to health. Smog became anomaly in many large cities, rather than an everyday blight. Yet we still didn't understand climate dynamics very well, so our legislation was incomplete. Research and development of the new computer technology resulted in chemical compounds

that had never before existed, and without regulations to require testing these molecules were dumped or released with impunity. By 2007, a study was released that documented more than 500,000 violations of the Clean Water Act, all without a single prosecution. The EPA tested fish taken from 291 rivers in America, and found that every single one contained mercury, and more than 1/4 of the fish tested exceeded legal limits for human consumption, and again, no one has gone to jail. It appears that just having laws on the books is not enough, government must also fund the agency tasked with enforcing the regulations, and the laws must be kept current to deal with newly created compounds. The end result of valuing profit over life is that life will inevitably suffer.

An economy that addresses these issues will need to be focused within the local bioregion. State policy decisions favor profitability over social and environmental sustainability. The macro-level policy decisions choose the interests of corporations and investors over those of workers, indigenous peoples, the world's poor, and that voiceless, vote-less entity: the environment. This situation is entirely understandable, as long as corporations are free to spend whatever they wish to pay for lobbyists to encourage or discourage legislation, to pay for media to push political agendas, and to make unlimited campaign

contributions. But noticing that when local people are involved in making decisions that affect their backyards, better decisions get made. We tend to mimic nature and avoid fouling our own nest. When decisions are made in other states or even other countries, about what types of pollution and waste will be generated as the cost of doing business, and where that pollution will take place, we allow decision makers to avoid the results of their callous, inappropriate actions.

As discussed in other sections, corporate capitalism also dictates a single development strategy for poor nations: a market-driven, private sector-led, export-based strategy that opens them up to foreign capital and foreign investment. The resources and labor are plundered, often at fire-sale prices, as governments are coerced into taking on debt for projects that they can't afford to maintain, for products they don't need or are unacceptable within the local culture. Whether you call it bribery or corruption or economic coercion, the wheels of finance and corporate profits are greased with payoffs and special benefits that accrue to those in power who give away the farm to foreign entities²⁶.

The sad truth is, America is already just as ripe for this kind of plucking as any other nation. As Herb Stein, former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors said,

²⁶ Interested in finding out more? Read, "*Confessions of an Economic Hitman*" by John Perkins

“Things that can’t go on forever, don’t.” Once America is plundered, where will corporations turn to find their next mark? There’s not an endless source of land, ores, rare earths, and oil on a finite planet. What will the change from corporate capitalism to localized economies look like? How will we manage to make collapse into the best thing that ever happened to America?

It’s the Economy, Not Peak Oil

So after all, we can see that peak oil is a symptom, not the cause of our collapse. Looking back to the beginning of the Petroleum Era, barely 150 years ago, oil was the resource that created our current, huge economic bubble. Getting such power and energy for prices that were barely noticeable was an enormous windfall. If a truck can pull 80,000 pounds up a slight incline at the rate of one mile in five minutes, it would take a man 80 days to accomplish the same amount of work. 80 days vs. five minutes is a huge energy boon to mankind. It has allowed for the incredible explosion of technology and population we have seen over the last 50 years.

For years, a few of us have warned about Peak Oil. The idea is not that we will run out of oil; it is inconceivable that mankind will ever get the last drop of oil out of the ground.

Rather, it is the fact that oil will not remain cheap that lies behind Peak Oil. Oil is in everything we buy or use: food, medicines, transportation, building supplies, cosmetics, you name it; it contains oil at some point the production and supply chain. Initially it cost us but one barrel of energy to get 30 barrels of oil from the ground meant that it was extremely cheap; today we are lucky to get more than five barrels for one. When oil was seeping from the ground, or yards deep, drilling a well was an overnight job. But for many years, 40 in the case of the United States, this easy access to oil has become just a memory. Now when we locate deposits worth exploiting, we find ourselves drilling through 4 miles of Earth while sitting above a mile of water in the Gulf of Mexico, or thanking our lucky stars that the ice at the North Pole has melted enough to allow us to set up drills on Arctic soil rather than ice. In terms of our economy, the breakeven point today is about \$80/barrel, meaning that is the cost of exploration, drilling and processing oil. And in America, corporate whining means that the government subsidizes the larger oil companies to the tune of about \$60 billion a year, despite profits of, in Exxon's case, more than \$40 billion annually.

We used to worry that Peak Oil would bring down the economy, as the price of oil spiked when supply could not keep up with demand. We saw China and India begin to

industrialize, and as they grew a middle class, we expected that the increased consumption as these hard-working people pursued the American Dream would increase demand on oil reserves even more. We knew that this demand would hasten the day when the world could no longer supply what was needed for continued growth. We expected that this would be the trigger for collapse. We have ignored the lessons of the Great Depression.

In the early 1930s, following the stock market crash of 1929, America dominated the world's oil market. Though much of the planet had yet to taste the advantages that oil provided, those portions that knew found their thirst increasing rapidly. Besides oil, America possessed huge, untapped natural resources; coal, natural gas, timber, great soil, and water, to name but a few. Despite this natural wealth, the bursting of the economic bubble led to a tightening of credit, and when credit is tight and no one has ready access to capital, all of the resources in the world stay in the ground. The lesson from all of this is that either the oil or the economic bubble can break first; if oil goes, the surge in price eats up discretionary income and any other capital it can, and that lowers consumption of all other aspects within the economy. If the economic bubble pops first, depression lowers demand for oil, and as demand drops, prices drop too. This delays the onset of Peak Oil by months or

even years. But the limited financing options in a depression, and the lower price for oil due to the lessening of demand, mean that there is less money available for maintenance of existing oil fields and less funding for exploration. There is a long lead-time, well over five years, from the time oil is discovered until it can be extracted from the ground and refined. If discovery and recovery are delayed due to lack of funds, then even when the economy is ready to recover, we lack the oil needed to increase the production of goods.

The collapse of the global economy in 1929 discredited the proponents of deregulated markets. It permitted alternative visions, many of them products of the socialist, anarchist and communist movements that once existed in the United States, to be heard. We adjusted to a new economic and political reality. The capacity to be critical of political and economic assumptions led to the New Deal, the dismantling of corporate monopolies and heavy government regulation of banks and corporations. But this time, because we forgot the lessons of the past, because just a handful of corporations control the organs of mass communication, and because thousands of economists, business school professors, financial analysts, journalists and corporate managers have staked their credibility on the utopianism of globalism, we heed the advice of Alan Greenspan, who believed the novelist

Ayn Rand was an economic prophet, or Larry Summers, whose deregulation of our banks as treasury secretary under President Bill Clinton helped snuff out some \$17 trillion in wages, retirement benefits and personal savings. Because we forgot the lessons of 1930, we distract ourselves with meaningless shopping, meaningless entertainment, and meaningless sound bites on the evening news. Because we forgot, we accept that the 22 million jobs lost in the past 4 years will not be back anytime soon: we cheer when the unemployment report says we added 200,000 jobs in any particular month, ignoring that it takes 125,000 new jobs just to account for young people entering the workforce for the first time. Because we forgot the lessons, we think that pouring money into banks is the answer, rather than creating meaningful work, improving education for our children, or repairing our crumbling cities. And lest we forget, the turning point in our recovery from the Great Depression was the manufacturing boom that resulted from World War II. Anyone care for WWII as a way out of today's mess? Or can we scrap this boom-or-bust model altogether, and replace it with a steady, sustainable economy and a political system that heeds, and cares for, *all* life?

Chris Hedges, writing in "*The Collapse of Globalization*", sums up the need to awaken and act to create a better economic and political future like this:

“And until we awake from our collective self-delusion, until we carry out sustained acts of civil disobedience against the corporate state and sever ourselves from the liberal institutions that serve the corporate juggernaut—especially the Democratic Party—we will continue to be rocketed toward a global catastrophe.”

Having limited economic resources due to depression also impedes our ability to deal with climate change. As temperature and rainfall patterns change, we must relocate our food production and build new infrastructure to deliver water to our farms. If credit and capital is reduced because of the economic downturn, we will be unable to fund these changes. Depression also starves the government of revenue, so any project or person dependent upon the government for economic assistance has problems. If you don't know when you will be paid next, because you aren't working, the government assistance is meager, or you fear being laid off, then you don't spend the little bit of money you have unless it is absolutely essential. When people don't spend and can't borrow, because our monetary system depends on debt to create money, the actual supply of money shrinks. When there is no money available, the whole system seizes up

and eventually ceases to function. The long supply chain needed to bring you strawberries in January when it is 10 degrees below outside, collapses too.

These issues erode the trust we all have in the system; trust that if we follow the rules we will prosper. We naturally target the large institutions when systems fail; banks become the target of diatribes and retributions. We are already seeing huge amounts of anger towards the banks that were paid 100 cents on the dollar for their failed bets on credit default swaps, their predatory lending practices, and their payment of huge bonuses using taxpayer bailout funds. After selling the idea of a bailout in 2008 using the rationale that homeowners with rising mortgage interest rates needed help, the administration switched tracks and gave the banks nearly \$2 trillion instead, to use as they saw fit. The President claimed the banks needed these funds to free up the credit market, but instead the banks used the money for employee bonuses, to acquire other banks (thus becoming even bigger despite the concerns about being ‘too big to fail’), and to bolster their balance sheets. But precisely because they no longer trusted *each other*, they refused to restart the credit market.

On one hand, this lack of lending has to be part of the ultimate solution. We cannot continue to borrow more than we can repay, although this has been our pattern of late.

America's national debt is 100% of our annual economic output, when measured using the current formula for Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As the 2008 study "*This Time Is Different*" points out, historically no economy has recovered from a debt-to-GDP ratio of greater than 95% without collapse and/or hyperinflation. In the long-term, by definition borrowing to fund programs today means that more wealth will be needed to retire the debt in the future. We accept on its face the contention of the financial industry that tomorrow's growth can pay for today's excessive spending. We ignore that banks have morphed away from providing loans that create capital into manufacturing debt as a product, something that they can sell to naïve investors (and even other banks) without needing to care whether borrowers will ever repay. We fail to ask the most important question when considering financing our deficits with borrowing: what will we need to forgo tomorrow, in capital formation and real growth, because we've borrowed so much today?

But in the near-term, the banks' refusal to lend has only increased the distrust citizens have in those large financial institutions, resulting in an increasingly number of people willing to walk away from their debts. Debts that are more than we can ever repay, ultimately become unrepayable. Once a few people renounce their debts, citing the

predatory lending, the lack of employment, the usurious interest rates being charged, or any number of reasons why they should not have to honor their bargain with the banks, the domino effect can spread the contagion far and wide. People begin to worry that if they miss the forgiveness train as it leaves the station, they might not get free of debt like those earlier, luckier folks. The run on the bank reminiscent of the 1930s happens without anyone setting foot inside a bank building. Coercion becomes the only way to force debtors to pay; once trust in the system is gone, once the fear is lost that the system will succeed in punishing the bankrupt, people will choose default over continued slavery to pay off their debts. On a personal level, do we enact new legislation with penalties for their failure to pay? Do we re-open debtor prisons? Do we simply cut offenders off from public assistance, even prohibit them from getting new jobs, and trust that they won't survive long without credit, jobs, or government help?

We will then need to recalibrate the economy together, but at a local level. For it is in local, face-to-face business dealings that trust is rebuilt. It is in local trading, bartering, and the use of local currencies that we find survival. At the sovereign level, survival under the current paradigm comes down to the code words: austerity measures. The requirements that allow credit to continue to be offered to governments

include cutting services to the people, raising taxes, and selling off of publicly-owned assets²⁷. In fact, this concept of austerity is built into the European Union (EU): The 1999 Maastricht fiscal and financial rules, an important portion of the bargain each government makes in order to join the Union, prohibits the financing of national debt in excess of 60% of GDP²⁸ or annual deficits of more than 3%²⁹. By default then, any expenses that would both exceed revenues and exceed these limits, must be pushed off to the private sector, which would endure no such limits. As Michael Hudson writes in “*A World at Financial War*”, these limits reflect an attitude that “... all government spending is deadweight waste and only private investment is productive.” As just one example, roads become toll roads, subject to monopoly and absorbing much more income from citizens than would have been the case if the roads remained *in*

²⁷ And make no mistake about it; banks always finance the buyouts of public assets, with the inherent profit from interest. This contributes to a disturbing fact: financial sector profits comprise more than 40% of *all profit* in America today.

²⁸ By way of comparison, the U.S. debt is 100% of GDP in 2011

²⁹ Would it surprise you to know that Greece used a “loan” with no interest due until a balloon payment a decade from now to get around this limit on their borrowing and spending? Would it surprise you to learn that this dodgy strategy was conceived and executed by Goldman Sachs?

the commons. As another, do you care to visit the Exxon Coliseum in Rome?

The result of all of these measures is a contracting rate of growth in the economy, and soon the interest on the debt exceeds the growth rate. More and more real wealth must go to service the debt, though the debt truly will never be repaid. Austerity measures just kick the can down the road, ostensibly waiting for a time when growth returns. These measures become more and more draconian, and end up being political suicide for the officeholders unfortunate enough to have been elected during these times. Witness the succession of five Presidents within two months as Argentina went through this kind of crisis last century. Eventually, as more and more of the country's assets are sold during austerity, the citizens become slaves in their own country, working for their foreign masters and not their neighbors. This is, after all, the goal of globalization; get governments everywhere so deep in debt that they must sell everything to rich and powerful foreigners at fire sale prices.

The takeaway is that the whole point of austerity measures is to keep the bankers whole, to prevent them from having to settle debts for pennies on the dollar. We can't restructure debts, lowering the amount of principal owed or lowering the interest rate charged, without crashing the banks.

Remember, under this monetary system, banks don't have money sitting in their vaults, just waiting to be lent out; they create loans out of thin air. Having made a loan, the value of the underlying asset is what allows the bank to make its next loan; when values plummet through depression or excessive insolvencies, banks can no longer lend. If they are forced through restructuring to devalue the loans they've already made, they quickly become insolvent themselves. This would trigger the need to settle credit default swaps (CDS), which are mere-decades-old financial products concocted, ostensibly as insurance, to allow banks to gamble on which loans will or will not be repaid. Due to their being so new, there are hardly any regulations around these "instruments of financial destruction", a phrase popularized by Warren Buffett. It is impossible under current conditions to know how much is riding in the CDS market, but reliable estimates in 2009 placed their value at over \$600 *trillion*, or 12 times the annual *global* economic production. It would be impossible to bail out any bank, should there be an issue with credit default swaps. Such a problem would trigger an immediate collapse of this house of cards.

Interest rates are really a risk premium, as risk increases, rates do too. In other words, if I can't trust you to repay me, I ask for higher rates of interest in the hope that I will be made whole sooner, and before you

ultimately default on the loan. This calculation is determined as bonds and other IOUs are sold in the market; buyers evaluate risk and only buy when they feel the interest offered matches risk appropriately. As worldwide concern over the debt of the United States grows, the risk premium a sensible investor would require also grows. The program of the Federal Reserve to buy up all unsold U.S. Treasuries at the offered rate of nearly 0% ensures the government is funded, with money created out of thin air, and without raising interest rates. In previous years, foreign entities, governments, banks, and investors purchased much of the U.S. debt. Recently, only a smattering of this debt has gone overseas. The Fed needs to keep interest rates low so that other rates, pegged to the treasury rate (mortgages, for example) stay affordable. If the treasury rate increases and mortgage payments skyrocket, we would see even greater default rates than at the peak of the foreclosure crisis in 2010. Higher interest rates also divert capital from the economy and to the banks. Taking funds out of the economy means fewer jobs, less consumption, more risks in loans and therefore higher rates, and the spiral works ever-downward. And where does all of this capital go? It goes to bankers, via their multi-million-dollar bonuses, of course.

Markets used to be about investing; today they are about speculation and gambling.

There was a time within my own memory, when you purchased a stock or a bond because you believed the company had a decent product and would prosper, and you wished to share in that prosperity. The last few decades, this mindset has been overcome by a different one: one that rewards people for watching trend lines, and jumping into (or out of) price swings caused by momentum and emotions such as fear and greed rather than any particular change in the real value of the underlying property. Or put another way, when the stock market rises it is often because of speculation, not a fundamental change in any company, or asset. It is because a few hedge fund traders, speculating with other people's money, walked away with multimillion-dollar commissions for inflating the commodities bubble by a hundred billion dollars. The markets have become all about phantom wealth, or wealth that is not backed by any real asset value³⁰. Today's traders love volatility; it is within the quick, wide swings in value that arbitrage opportunities exist for computer trading programs to exploit. Make even a few pennies per stock on trades of millions of stocks, and you can make serious money quickly. It makes no difference if valuations are rising or falling, a good program can provide gains in either

³⁰ Similarly, we value phantom wealth in our own lives as we become *loanowners*, not *homeowners*, and then just *feel rich* instead of actually *being rich*.

direction.. Trading becomes about phantom wealth based on emotion and change, rather than any fundamental, real value. When there is little else to invest in, because interest rates are near zero and housing prices continue to fall, so much money pours into the market that speculation is easy. We endure cycles of boom and bust in oil prices; they skyrocket in 2008, and then fall back (nearly 80% in just 5 months) as the global economy seizes up, only to climb again as the dollar inflates and the global economy showed glimmers of recovery in 2011. Expect this volatility to increase as the overwhelming debt cramps the real economy. And remember that as the price of oil falls below \$80/barrel, many of the wells we currently tap to supply our growth will shut down; they cost more to operate than they will get for selling the product. Just because we see prices for oil at \$30/barrel like 2009 doesn't mean that oil is suddenly cheap: your income may well be so small as to prohibit you from purchasing oil even when it is this cheap.

So what are we to do? Again, we can start today to make our local communities more resilient and durable, able to endure the coming collapse of today's worldwide trading system. This means bringing as much manufacturing and agriculture back into our neighborhoods as we can. It means establishing local currencies, time banks, and barter systems now so that when we

need them, the heavy lifting has already been done. It means relearning food storage techniques and machine repair skills that our grandparents took for granted. It means shedding those obligations and desires that do not add to our peace of mind; recalibrating what it means to have *enough*. It means building the trust of your neighbors, because soon these may be the only folks you can trust.

Local Economy

Focusing entirely on profit has turned our economy from wealthy and self-reliant to poor and dependent. As we become more and more cash-dependent, rather than bartering or gifting, it becomes much easier for the real wealth of our community; its resources, labor and energy, to flow out from the neighborhood and into coffers far away. Cash facilitates the impoverishment our community, in other words. Because so much cash leaves the neighborhood, we become dependent upon outside cash flowing into the region, either by purchasing and extracting our resources or compensating us for labor that is controlled and directed from afar. Thus our most important relationships are built not between neighbors, but with impersonal corporations or people that we may never even meet. This relegation of our power to

outsiders leaves us at their mercy. We become vulnerable to events and decisions that we may not even know about, much less have any say about. We must break this cycle of dependency if we are to again gain self-reliance. Can we restate what it means to be wealthy, focused on relationships and sufficiency rather than profits and greed, and build an economy that respects this ideal?

Let's imagine what the economy would look like if oil goes over \$100 per barrel and never returns to today's "cheap" price. It would become much more expensive to travel; not only would the price of gas for your personal vehicle make it difficult for you to justify driving long distances by yourself, but bus and plane tickets would once again have fuel-surcharges added to their price, making them very expensive and eating deeply into your pocketbook. The cost of much of the food you buy at the local chain supermarket would also rise, especially items like tomatoes in February, now flown in from South America when it is too cold to grow them here. The "Green Revolution", which increased yield-per-acre so much that now only a few percent of the American population works in a field, depends on petroleum as the source of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers, transportation of the product, and power for the machinery to plant and harvest the crop. Even produce grown in the US, and products that contain corn or wheat (which today means nearly

every food “product”) would become more expensive because petroleum is the foundation of our food system, and supermarkets would once again offer only seasonal produce for sale. Workers would be ever more interested in telecommuting, as their commute costs soar; but they run the risk that their tasks will be outsourced to someone outside the US who will answer phones and email for far less compensation and no benefits. Fewer dollars available after purchasing food and fuel means fewer jobs overall, and more demand for the government’s assistance, at the same time that government revenue from income and sales taxes decline.

These are the takeaways: transportation and food will be quickly, and radically, different. Both aspects of life in America will lose their international flavor and become primarily local, focused within your community and/or bioregion. Cities will fare better than suburbs, once transportation costs soar and the availability of gasoline shrinks, if only because they are more suitable to walking and biking. But living in suburbs with large lots will be better than living in cities, if you want to grow more food than you can eat, to trade with your neighbors. It may not be glamorous, and it may challenge many of us physically, but the trend in coming years will shift more and more workers out of the service industry and back into farming. To get a jump on this,

consider organizing your neighborhood; see who is already gardening, see who would like to trade crops so that nothing goes to waste. It is so often the case that after weeks and months of effort, the crop ripens and you can't give it all away. Relearning canning and other food storage techniques, or trading your corn for some tomatoes grown next-door, are both excellent ways to avoid waste. Consider planting a garden on your roof. It not only captures rainwater for a useful purpose, it also reduces the city's heat island effect, and helps to insulate your home too. As your neighborhood begins to interact beyond the occasional passing wave of the hand, you might build up a list of tools that people are willing to share, to minimize consumption. Begin to garden in the front yard, and not just on the rear portion of your lot. *Food Not Lawns* is a great way to boost a sense of community, to "meet your neighbors", as well as putting soil to better use. Organize potlucks to facilitate getting to know each other, so that when a natural disaster such as earthquake, tornado or flood strikes, you know who is the most vulnerable, and whom to check on first.

If you are on board with this idea of increasing the resiliency of your neighborhood or community, consider opening a center where people come together to learn and network. Offer classes in beekeeping, composting, and raising chickens and rabbits. Organize microloans to

savings groups in your area, to help finance a return to local manufacturing and to build a new, local investing paradigm focused on long-term needs rather than short-term greed. Offer book discussion groups, film series, and guest lectures about sustainability. Host workshops that offer personal and spiritual growth or that teach networking and coalition-building skills. Offer the space for non-profits and 12-step programs to hold meetings. Let local non-profit organizations leave literature to solicit volunteers. Sponsor garden produce swaps. Provide a template and support for neighborhood associations to enmesh the community. Use social media (like Facebook and Twitter) and e-newsletters to keep your neighbors informed of the local community calendar of events. Focus on teaching people to fend for themselves, rather than waiting on the government to step in with help. Focus on food, shelter, transportation and security in a world where we have no access to imports and no one has any dollars to use to “buy” these goods and services.

Because transportation will become so difficult and expensive, mechanical abilities will also once again be needed in each community. Having the ability to repair broken machinery, or to design a replacement from existing parts, will be invaluable. Neighbors will plan a trip to market together, to minimize the use of fuel. Someone with a bike and a trailer might be able to trade

delivery services for food. Modifying homes to incorporate awnings or improve insulation (at least until the local hardware store runs out of materials) will ease life as the climate changes.

As you ponder the future, it is helpful to take the baby steps that begin this journey away from fossil fuels while we still have some say in the matter. If we already have alternative structures functioning, they can easily be expanded and modified to deal with changing conditions. If we have to start from the beginning, developing a sense of belonging and mutual assistance with collapse staring us in the face, it will go much more badly for us all. This is why I encourage you to develop a *local currency*. Before you discard this idea as fanciful, realize that to a small degree, it is already happening in the U.S. Here is an excerpt from an article in USA Today, 10 April 2009:

Workers with dwindling wages are paying for groceries, yoga classes and fuel with Detroit Cheers, Ithaca Hours in New York, Plenty in North Carolina or BerkShares in Massachusetts. About a dozen communities have local currencies, says Susan Witt, founder of BerkShares in the Berkshires region of western Massachusetts. Under the BerkShares system, a buyer goes to one of 12 banks and pays \$95 for \$100 worth of

BerkShares. BerkShares can be spent in 370 local businesses. Since its start in 2006, the system, the largest of its kind in the country, has circulated \$2.3 million worth of BerkShares. In Detroit, three business owners are printing \$4,500 worth of Detroit Cheers, which they are handing out to customers to spend in one of 12 shops.

During the Depression, local governments, businesses and individuals issued currency, known as scrip, to keep commerce flowing when bank closings led to a cash shortage.

How is this different from the U.S. government printing legal tender without resorting to borrowing? But for scale, it's no different. And it works. However, it is really but a Band-Aid placed over a wound that requires innovative, cutting edge surgery. But having a local currency already in place would facilitate switching to using it full-time should the dollar begin to hyperinflate.

Another approach is to have a local currency that comes into use as a rebate or refund. For example, when I buy a product from a participating merchant, the business may rebate 10% of the purchase price in the local currency. I can use that local currency at any participating merchant to cover the cost of my next purchase, in whole or in part.

I continue to get a rebate for the cash portion of any purchase; merchants promote their business through the advertising (now usually a website) of the currency exchange, and get business that might otherwise have gone to a national chain store instead.

The larger idea here is twofold: to encourage money to stay within the local community, and to make community businesses attractive for investment. When your dollars go to purchase goods at the local national chain store, over 90% of the money leaves your community. It goes to pay suppliers, often to manufacturing businesses overseas, and the profits leave your state and flow to corporate headquarters somewhere far away. Eventually the profits are invested in new outlets in other communities, or distributed to shareholders who might be anywhere in the world. When you purchase locally made products from locally owned retailers however, studies show that 44% of the money spent recirculates within your own neighborhood. Businesses that are community-based, not national, in scale could always use investment capital to hire more people, expand product lines, or even begin to manufacture goods to supplant imports. As a local currency blossoms, let's consider allowing investors to designate their funds for investing in locally owned businesses. Today the securities registration process is so cumbersome that small business is effectively prohibited from

soliciting the investment it needs to become more responsive to the local community's needs. Eventually, we will want to be able to help our neighbors grow their business, especially when Wal-Mart can't afford to import goods from China anymore.

There are other ways to tap into the local labor pool, such as the idea of a Timebank. Here, a person performs work for another member, and is credited with the time they spend on the particular task. They can use that credit to receive services from another member, in trade. This is a very useful way to allow people to tap the skills of others without having to spend cash. It also places equal value on work performed by everyone. Whatever ends up replacing modern, industrial capitalism would do well to consider that all work is valuable to society, and to move away from the paradigm that has a minimum wage that is insufficient to support a family for work that is nonetheless essential.

To some degree, this *invest locally* idea is already in play today. Moving your banking needs to a small, local bank, and away from the multinationals JPM Chase or Bank of America for instance, goes a long way to ensuring that your deposits benefit a budding local business. The smaller institutions, including credit unions, tend to focus on nearby opportunities and are less likely to bundle, slice and sell their loans to foreign investors. This is a procedure we can

all support. “Move Your Money” is a great idea to begin this process today.

Consider joining, or forming a cooperative. We’ve always had co-ops, even early last century farmers often banded together to get loans in order to plant or to get bulk discounts that they otherwise would not qualify for. Often, the farmers’ co-op offered expertise and support in other ways, too. As a place to gather and share experience and information, a visit to one’s co-op incorporated social as well as business aspects. Today, city-dwellers may shop at a local co-op without realizing the wealth of services and information that members receive. We have lost touch with so much gardening and food storage lore that connecting with master gardeners will be essential to our success. Developing a relationship with the farmer who is growing our food puts our mind at ease. We gain comfort knowing the techniques used to grow our food, and when we pitch in to help during the time-intensive portions of the growing season, helping with planting, weeding and harvesting, our food always seems to taste better. Whether you sign up for a Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) plan that delivers food regularly right to your door, or volunteer at a community garden and take home fresh produce after every shift, we can all enjoy a more intimate relationship with our food.

The American version of industrial capitalism, or corporate capitalism, dominates the global economy today. Different from the social capitalism of Europe for instance, it focuses on “free individuals that compete in the marketplace”. It fails to grasp however, that people are social creatures. We evolved in communities that helped one another, that shared watch throughout the night to keep everyone safe, that carried the ill and very young when the tribe was forced to move by drought or flood or encroaching ice. It also ignores that when the individual is valued, or places his or her own feelings of self-worth, in terms of how much “money” has been the result of their “work”, the ensuing competition for money inevitably leads to conflict between companies, between owners and workers, and between owners and nature. It also turns out to be very unsatisfying, as the increase in the use of anti-depressants (and other drugs, both legal and not) shows. These issues are also demonstrated today in the widening gap between rich and poor Americans and by the rampant environmental devastation.

That the world’s richest nation can have over 20% of its population hungry during a given year, or that nearly 20% of its workforce can be idle or underemployed and therefore falling behind in loan repayment and struggling to survive without health care, also shines a light on the results of

competition and the pitfalls of individuality. We humans need emotional support and cooperation in order to reach our pinnacle of development, in order to fulfill our integral part in the Web that is Life on Earth. Isn't it time we began to act as the social, compassionate beings we are?

True Cost Pricing

The Chilean economist Manfred Max-Neef proposes teaching economics using fundamental concepts that are not reflected in our current paradigm. He states that the economy serves the people, the opposite of our current model, which has people serving the economy. The fact that corporations are treated under the law as a person is just one outcome of the belief that people are tools to be used by the economy. He says that development is not the same as growth, and that development doesn't require growth. Look to nature, for example: everything grows, but at a certain point, growth stops. Unlimited growth is what we call *cancer*. You yourself grew through your first two decades of life, but everything (hopefully) since then has been about development, not growth. Today, when we use the term development we usually are speaking about objects, not people; developing meaning building homes or businesses on top of Nature, or creating new entities to chase after money.

Development *can mean* increasing our happiness, or finding ways to gain more time to be spent in developing relationships that feed our souls. A quick story: In the late 1960s, a Peace Corps volunteer spent time in a small village in South America. She saw a villager who wove ponchos on a hand-driven loom. She arranged to get an electrical-powered loom brought to the weaver, so that instead of one or two ponchos a month, she could make one or two ponchos a day. A year later, the volunteer returned to the village to see how the weaver was doing with her new loom. She found the weaver still producing just one or two ponchos a month, albeit in much less time. The volunteer, aghast, inquired of the weaver why she wasn't producing more ponchos with her more efficient loom. The weaver explained that the new loom had enabled her to have more time to spend with her family, and that was a great blessing. She felt no need to make more ponchos (and may not have had a market for more anyway), and was grateful that her time could now be devoted to something *more important than just making an object*.

Extrapolated to economics, can we envision an economy that constantly improves but doesn't get larger? Our ability to develop is unlimited; our ability to grow is not. And ultimately, why is this notion necessary? It is needed because the economy is just a subsystem of a finite biosphere, and hence permanent growth is not only undesirable,

but also impossible. Nothing we create is more important than life itself, and by life we mean all of life, not just human beings. No economy is possible without an ecosystem to supply space, energy and raw materials. Sustaining our ecosystems are an integral part of any business we hope to transact, if we are continue to develop. Ignoring our ecosystems just brings about the destruction of our economy that much sooner.

What changes would we make in order to incorporate these ideas into an economy that is sustainable? We would base this economy on at least two principles, one is true cost pricing and the other is the value and importance of community-based development and manufacturing. True cost pricing is the understanding that all costs of producing, using, and disposing of an object must be included in the price for which it sells. For example, if oil is pumped from the ground and the pumping or processing of that oil leads to pollution, then the costs of mitigating or cleaning up that pollution have to be accounted for when the products are sold. Today those costs are borne later, as they become impossible to ignore, by society through government-funded cleanup operations. One way to incorporate true cost pricing into our new model is with a carbon tax, meaning a cost that is borne by the oil producer and passed along as the oil proceeds through the cycle refining and sale.

Not to be confused with cap-and-trade³¹, this tax would fund programs to educate people about using less oil-based products, as well as to enforce Clean Air and Clean Water laws and to clean up after oil-well accidents or tanker spills. It might fund research into auto technology to raise miles per gallon, or mitigation procedures to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, or even to find alternative ways to get around that don't require burning fossil fuels. True cost pricing would make goods and services more expensive, but would end the current paradigm that sees power plants and waste incinerators sited only in areas of the world where the people are poor and disenfranchised, where native peoples are pushed off their ancestral land as companies pursue easily-extracted resources, and where cheap transportation costs allow manufacturing to move to countries with no worker protections, pitiful wages, and no pollution prevention standards.

³¹ Cap-and-trade is a product of the current economic model that believes the free market will always 'price' a solution. It places a price on the ability to pollute, in effect making pollution a 'right' and inevitable, then allows businesses that choose not to pollute to trade their own 'right' to pollute to companies who would rather not help keep our environment safe. This enshrines pollution as just a cost of doing business, and opens the door to gaming the system for profit; neither are good strategies if we want to end pollution and its consequences.

Consider how true cost pricing can affect gasoline: if you calculate the cost of its environmental impacts, health impacts, destruction of property from acid rain, and maintaining access to Persian Gulf oil, its price would be anywhere from \$9 - \$20/gallon. At \$12/gallon, would you drive the same car that you do today? Would any company *make* the car you drive today? Here's another example: coal. Hermann Scheer, member of the German Parliament, estimated that the global subsidy and externalities for the coal industry to be about \$800 billion *annually*. Let's say he has overestimated, and instead quantify it as \$200 billion. The market capitalization of the entire coal industry at that time was \$155 billion. In other words, we could close the coal industry, rehabilitate its impacts, retrain the workers, invest in clean energy, and still have money left over. This is the impact of true cost pricing: it shows you if your money is well spent. The U.S. Navy has higher energy standards than even California. The Army spends \$400/gallon for gasoline in Afghanistan, and has made its commitment to alternative fuels even stronger than that of the Navy. Dollar for dollar, China is spending 12 times more on developing renewable energy than the U.S. despite having an economy that is one quarter the size. Which country will dominate this new millennium? A major impact resulting from our inability to get past sound bites and to look at the

evidence is that we continue to maintain systems that *don't work*. We so value *cheap* that we turn a blind eye to fact³².

When prices lie about the impact of purchasing any product, consumers can't make appropriate decisions about how, and with whom, to spend their money. Bringing these hidden costs out into the daylight, increasing our transparency with information, helps people make the right decision, even if they disagree about why it is important. Climate change deniers can easily see that reducing waste and preventing pollution are cost-effective even if they don't accept the argument that these issues are causing problems with our weather. We don't need to change their minds, only demonstrate how the changes we want to see can improve their lives. But until we stop subsidizing the old industries of coal and gas and corn, both directly through government payments and indirectly by allowing them to externalize costs, to push those expenses of

³² Speaking of turning a blind eye: look at any map of the fallout from Chernobyl, and you find that it stops at the French border. Authorities there didn't want to know the hard truth of what was happening, and so they didn't measure the radiation. That way, the public remained blissfully ignorant, and the government didn't have to spend money coping with the problem or relocating citizens. After Fukushima, the U.S. did essentially the same thing, actually closing radiation-monitoring stations along the West Coast.

cleanup, remediation and disposal onto the public, no one has enough information about the real costs of these products to make informed decisions.

The second aspect, basing the economy on community-sized production, is more complicated. As the cost of gasoline rises, which it can only do over the long run as more and more people vie for less and less oil and that oil that is available becomes more expensive to produce, our ability to pay to have tomatoes shipped in from south America in February will become a distant “old folks’ fairy tale”. The sheer cost of moving goods will mean we focus on eating what we can locally grow, and buying what we can locally produce. We will become much less dependent upon a national currency, and may find ourselves using a local currency for everyday business, reserving the dollar for use in trade with other, nearby communities or regions. Companies will be local or, at their largest, regional. As we have forgotten many of the skills that saw our ancestors through times without much world trade, such as milking, building, farming, and health care, we will need to prioritize our use of family members’ knowledge, electricity and libraries to glean as much know-how as we can before our grandparents pass away, the acid in our paper destroys our books, and the lack of power or parts make our computers useless. What method will we use to preserve

information when computers aren't in every pocket? Remaining local-sized allows companies to see the effects that manufacturing has on the local environment, and since no one wants to foul their own nest, to remediate and prevent these effects immediately. In today's economy, when decisions are made geographically far away and based solely on short-term profits and fail to take local impact into account, we consistently see ecosystem destruction. Companies ruin one parcel or mine or community, then move along to the next, most cost-effective one, without concern or compensation for those who are left to deal with the tragic consequences. Our *safety net*, our ability to get through times of trouble, becomes dependent upon the relationships we develop with our neighbors, not on government handouts that come at the expense of borrowing (affecting all who hold the currency) or taxing (affecting all who earn enough to be forced to contribute). We focus on developing what some have termed the *caring* economy. We find ways to reward people who care for our youngsters or the sick and infirm, with barter or reciprocal care or even just a heartfelt thank you, and without resorting necessarily to paid, impersonal daycare³³ or making it subject to

³³ Please don't take this as disparaging daycare providers; most people, if given the choice, would prefer that parents or other close family members care for young children, rather than seeing the

an insurance company's approval/denial process.

What stands in our way, what is preventing us from making the moves that sound so correct and so much better, towards this caring, life-affirming, and sustainable economy? In the words of Derrick Jensen:

"If in your world, food comes from the grocery store and water comes from the tap, you will defend to the death the system that makes that possible. Without that system, you would die. If instead, your water comes from a river and food comes from the land, you will defend that land and river to the death."

What are you defending, in your thoughts and actions, today? Are you like me, trying hard to change the system, right up to but not quite past, changing the system itself? When do we reach the understanding that everything we have done in the past, and everything we are doing today, has not worked and is not working? Today, if you stay in a hotel in a resort city in Mexico that caters to tourists (not to locals, who cannot afford the charges and don't care to drink at the swimming pool bar) and you partake of the complementary breakfast, you will find that the butter being served in its tiny,

children placed in a situation where strangers are spending the bulk of the day watching them.

plastic container is made in New Zealand. In fact, New Zealand butter is served in hotels around the world. Focusing on local and community based business will end this insane use of resources, bypassing local cows to ship butter thousands of miles often at some cost to safety, quality and/or nutritional value, and once again bring locally produced butter onto our tables.

Paying The Taxman

Js it clear that our current system of taxation is broken? The U.S. government collects about \$1.1 trillion in individual income taxes, \$500 billion in corporate taxes, and another \$600 billion in Social Security and Medicare taxes³⁴. This income leaves us currently about \$1.5 trillion short at the end of the year. In order to fund our largesse, we borrow, primarily from the Federal Reserve, but also from other countries and individual or corporate investors. In order to balance the budget, we would need to more than double personal tax rates or, as we've already seen, slash spending drastically.

What has our constant tweaking of the tax code, usually at the behest of business or campaign contributors, brought us to in

³⁴ Also from individuals, and focused primarily on the poor and middle class, since the collection of the 6.2% Social Security tax stops once your income exceeds an inflation-adjusted \$106,800

America today? We have a tax code so extensive, that no one can possibly understand or implement it all. We get a morass of regulations, so complex that even employees of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), who are trained and paid to answer questions, get those answers wrong at least $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time. We get so many loopholes and tax breaks, that one of the richest men in the world, Warren Buffet, pays a lower tax rate than his own secretary. We find a Congress filled with Republicans so dead-set against raising taxes, that we have to borrow 42 cents of every dollar of federal spending. Their rationale, that raising taxes on the rich will prevent the job creation that supposedly will solve our economic problems, does not explain why the jobs haven't been created already: during the first three years of the Great Recession of 2007, tax rates were as low as Republican President George W. Bush dared set them.

Taxes have always been a method to redistribute wealth. Whether collected to fund the local bishop's manse construction, the landowner's carriage trips to a nearby big city to arrange his daughter's debut, a faraway king's Crusade, or a new dam project three states further west, money earned (or goods made, or food grown) in one locale is actually diverted and spent somewhere else by law, demand, or decree. We have historically used taxation as a means of social engineering. Prime examples include:

- Home Mortgage Interest Deduction: allowing taxpayers to deduct the interest portion of their mortgage payment makes buying a home more affordable and encourages people to buy who otherwise might not
- Special tax rates for long-term capital gains: allowing investors to pay less tax if they leave their money invested for long periods of time encourages such investment
- Earned Income Tax Credit: providing a tax refund to low-income taxpayers, primarily those with children, is a way to put more money in the hands of the working poor
- Penalty on early withdrawal from retirement accounts: if you break your agreement to defer tax on current income until a later time when you are retired, you pay a special penalty

These illustrate how taxes are used to encourage, reward, or penalize certain behavior. What if we take this concept and start from scratch designing our tax system? We might decide that having citizens working is a good thing, something to reward, and allow wages to be earned tax-free. We might consider investment a good thing, and allow interest, dividends and long-term capital gains to also be tax-free. How would we fund the government under this plan? How about something completely

different, with taxes that punish behavior that is not beneficial to society:

- Establish effective pollution monitoring and tax or fine companies and individuals that pollute. Target costs associated with particular goods and services related to clean-up and disposal following their use and ensure those costs are paid for either in the purchase price or by taxing the provider.
- Add a small (1/4 cent) transaction tax to derivatives trades and foreign currency exchange trades. The current volume of these trades would allow for significant revenue from this nearly-invisible tax, and would also enable more transparency and oversight on this whole trading complex.
- Tax short-term capital gains at 90%. Speculation and day-trading negatively affect prices on most goods and services in our country. Can we return to the days when stock trading was about investing in a company and sharing in its profits, not just expecting to gain a profit from the momentary movement of the stock's price? Our greed has forced our perspective to change; we expect to get great returns, double or triple digits each month or year, on our investments. Can we learn to

appreciate slow money, money that is invested with more than just greed and quick profit in mind?

- Tax usury income (interest in excess of 5% for example) at 50%.
- Tax corporate income whether or not it was earned in the U.S. Currently, if the international company leaves the profit in overseas accounts, it is not taxed here, although it announces its gains and its stock price reflects the income.
- Assess a corporate-level tax on products based on where they are manufactured: if the manufacturing takes place in China, there is a high tax to offset the wage differential; if in the US, a very low (or no) tax.
- Tax land according to its value aside from what is built on it. That value derives from what is going on around it, elements that the owner usually does not control. For example, just the announcement that the government will build an improved transportation system nearby raises the value of the land in the area. This is a windfall to the owners that comes from funds shared by all, and should be subject to tax. Provide credits against tax for protecting resources, i.e. leaving them in place rather than extracting them, and for cleaning up pollution.

- Establish a high tax rate on corporate income, then allow deductions from tax for actions considered good for society such as hiring new, full-time employees or installing green technology. Don't allow these deductions to offset tax resulting from pollution.
- Tax carbon at its source. *Do not* fall for cap-and-trade; there should be no possibility of reward while continuing to pollute. Make oil expensive so that other energy sources become more cost-effective without needing government subsidies

Notice that nearly all of the above suggestions make no mention of the location where the transaction takes place. In today's Internet environment, any new taxing proposal must account for the ease with which many services can be done remotely, products can be advertised and sold, thereby shifting earnings and profits into lower tax locations. Can we begin to step away from the idea of taxing based on the physical location? Establishing a tax that is transaction-based, and focused on the value of land and resources which cannot be moved, instead makes more sense.

If we aren't willing or able to make this kind of radical change, let's at least understand what is happening around the tax debates in Washington. The political

parties focus the debate on whether or not to raise income tax rates on individuals and couples who earn more than US\$250,000 per year. At a time of trillion-and-a-half dollar deficits, raising the top rate by just over 4% would increase revenue by over \$100 billion a year, or less than 10% of the problem. Seen from one perspective, why bother? It won't solve the problem, which runs much deeper than mere tax rates on the rich. The argument against raising the rate focuses on investment: the rich are the people who create jobs by investing in corporate entities. It is broadly hinted that the bulk of jobs created each year come from small business, and that only rich people start small businesses.

Before we dive into this morass, let's gain a historical perspective. In the 1960s, the highest incomes were taxed at a rate of 90%. Yet the economy did not crash down around our heads. Quite the contrary, the US economy grew robustly throughout the decade. As the rate began to come down, there is no identifiable correlation between falling rates and increased job creation. And certainly, immediately following the tax cuts in 2002 and 2003 that are now being debated, we cannot see evidence of job creation either. We are left to conclude that decreasing the taxes paid by the rich has other benefits, since they argue for them so loudly, but job creation is not one.

Find someone who makes \$300,000 a year and ask them, “What would you *do* with a 4% raise (\$12,000)?” The 4% figure is the amount that taxes would increase, should the Bush-era tax cut be repealed, so this is actually asking what *did you do* when the tax cut was first enacted years ago. Very few people will answer, “I think I’ll start a business.” In fact, most would say, “I will invest it.” As good as that sounds on the surface, there are two factors to consider if your goal is to turn around the recession we are mired in today. For one, the Federal Reserve is deeply focused on *increasing spending* as the way out of the mess. When the rich take their gains from lower taxes and invest them, usually in the stock market, it does nothing to increase spending on goods and services, the type of spending that creates jobs. And that leads to the second point, which is that buying existing stock on the stock market *does not benefit the company that issued the stock*. Especially in transactions that are meant to be short-term plays to quickly earn profit by reselling the stock after a small rise in value, speculation moves money from one account to another but does not impact the company whose stock is being traded. Of course, the company would like its share price to rise; if it decides to issue more stock at a later date, it will then receive a greater influx of cash for acquiring new assets. But in the day-to-day of market trading, which is nearly always

what is meant by “investment”, none of the profit (or loss) flows back to the actual company being traded. We see then, that if your goal is to spur purchasing goods and services leading to more job creation, a tax cut to the richest does nothing to meet that goal. The reverse is that by raising taxes today, by the 4% under consideration, few if any jobs will be lost. There will only be less money chasing quick profit in the stock market, and that is probably a good thing.

Land Reform

. **A** major aspect of the coming relocalization movement that has gotten no press is land reform. There are many terms we can use to discuss this:

- People's Council
- Land use reform
- Rezoning
- Community land ownership
- Political decentralization

If you were to mention these terms four decades ago, you'd have risked being labeled a communist, thrown into jail, or made to disappear forever. Not now. All the schemes, which were once perceived as radical and dangerous, have now become proposals for comprehensive national reform. What is land reform?

The birth of the Green Revolution, increased food production through the use of

petroleum-based fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, coincided with the destruction of the family farm. Huge agricultural corporations absorbed the majority of arable land in America, utilizing economies of scale and vast amounts of energy to provide food products at cheap prices. As oil becomes scarce, as our access to energy becomes less assured, and since these modern chemical farming methods have destroyed the topsoil around the world, it becomes crystal clear that this model of corporate agriculture cannot survive. The primary issue then becomes how to break up the large industrial farms into plots that can be tended using sustainable methods by people willing to rehabilitate the land. How do we return the land to people who care? This is the foundation of land reform: changing the paradigm of ownership to allow local people to control and use the land upon which they live and depend. This may not seem necessary if you are reading this before the economic troubles caused by the end of cheap oil or the debt bubble have brought the economy (and hence the deliver of affordable food) down around our ears. However, if that scenario occurs, this will become a very hot topic. We will see land abandoned due to climate change; changing rainfall patterns that turn farmland into desert, and flooding that makes homes on waterfronts unusable. Our suburbs may be abandoned due to gas shortages; many are

already ghost towns due to large numbers of foreclosures. High gas prices would just seal their fate. These issues may be a reason to begin the discussion about ownership. Can we focus on moving land into trusts, adding it to the commons, in other words? Let's allow trustees to manage it for all of us.

As we discuss moving land into a commons, can we also address the current ability of corporations to extract resources from land owned by citizens? Whether it is natural gas, oil, coal or any number of other underground assets, the extraction process often leaves pollution behind or destroys habitats used by people and animals. The life that lives on the surface must take precedence over profit.

The biggest hurdle to overcome is the resistant mindset, the notion that 'there is no alternative'. Of course we can control land use in new ways! Some argue that we should leave the current system in place and regulate the use of chemicals, or build a new transportation system that does not depend on oil to bring produce to market, rather than break up land monopolies. But there is a great danger in trying to work within the current business-dominated system if it means we are co-opted by it. Note how all of the large environmental groups have used the model of compromise and working inside the system, and have become so much a part of the system that they are ineffective. It also means kowtowing to the supremacy of the

corporation and the economic model that keeps us slaved to debt. Unless these hurdles are dismantled, real change will never materialize.

At the same time, expecting an easily done deal, or leaving things in the hands of the powers-that-be, only leads to disappointment and frustration. A strong people's network is key to effective monitoring. And that is what is needed to make sure changes strengthen people in local communities, rather than feed profit to multinational corporations. Indeed, how many times have the authorities, after a period of conflict with grass-roots movements, finally adopted the people's proposals, and then turned them into something else to preserve their turf? Given the bureaucracy's fierce fight for top-down control, will these local empowerment measures end up being mutilated, again?

We tell ourselves that we elect *leaders*; yet, politicians rarely lead. Instead they follow whichever way the wind is blowing. They harvest policy innovations from grass-roots groups for their political platform, and then reduce the impact by allowing the various government departments to defend their turf. Any reform of land use that allows for local control will need to find a way to wrest that control away from the state and federal governments, and large corporations.

We must be honest: the people's real enemy is the economic development model

that robs the poor of their natural resources in order to fatten the rich. Our political dreams will not improve our lot in life if new power groups still pursue top-down control and money-driven development. The movement's goal is to give localities greater control and the central state less. Moving “ownership” of land away from individuals and businesses and into the commons is just one solution. Change just doesn't come from a few people's ideas. It comes when small people like us band together to make things happen. And that's what we're doing every time we talk with our friends and neighbors about beginning programs that are locally funded and use local labor. Where will your food come from a decade from now? If you care about that answer, you care about land reform. Please begin the conversation in your neighborhood!

Why Social Justice?

Lyrics of the song “*It Ain’t Pretty*”,
performed by [Clay Walker](#) in the album [Fall](#):

*Driving home from work just
yesterday
impatiently waiting for the light to
change
I noticed a homeless mom and her
two kids
She reached out and lifted up a trash
can lid
Her face lit up when she looked inside
And pulled out a broken armless doll
knelt down and gave it to her
smallest Child
And God you should have seen her
smile*

*It ain’t pretty, but it’s beautiful
Life ain’t perfect, but it’s wonderful
We’re all broken, but we’re loveable
It ain’t pretty, but it’s beautiful*

*Got home and told my wife bout
what I’d seen
She grabbed her purse, took me by
the hand and said come with me
We drove around until we found the*

*three of them
I wondered who was blessing who
when they got in
We bought them food and clothes and
drove them to a toy store
And the little girl said "I don't need a
brand new doll"
as she hugged the broken armless
one they found before
she said, "this one needs me more"*

*She ain't pretty, but she's beautiful
She ain't perfect, but she's wonderful
She might be broken, but she's
loveable
She ain't pretty, but She's beautiful*

*Last night my wife and I talked till
the sun came up
About how we fuss and fight
sometimes,
Say ugly things act so unkind
But we thank God we always find
our way back to love*

*It ain't pretty, but it's beautiful
Our love ain't perfect, but it's
wonderful
We're still learning to be loveable
It ain't pretty, but it's beautiful
We're all learning to be loveable
Ain't always pretty, but it's beautiful*

*These **Clay Walker lyrics** are copyrighted by their rightful owner(s) and using them here in no way takes copyright or claims the lyrics belong to me.*

This book is about honesty, with our egos and with each other. It pulls no punches. It is not a rant. I intend to provoke and to push. I aim to point out areas where our culture and society builds space for us to remain acquiescing, comfortable, and unwilling to change too much. You may not recognize all of the perspectives; you are certainly familiar with some. Take what applies to you, use it, work with it, transcend it and move on. Build honest relationships that support you, and lend your honest support to others. Discuss this book, and the feelings and thoughts that arise within you as you read it, with your friends and family.

In our day-to-day lives we cannot talk about race, we live in a politically correct fantasy of equality. One's social or economic standing may allow a person of color to be present in situations where they are alone among a sea of white people. But even then, they continue to be mistreated, disrespected, and ostracized. This lie that we are a society of equality is exposed when you look at the color of the people in prison, at the color of the unemployed, at the color of the students attending universities, and at the color of the people serving in America's supposedly

volunteer armed forces. We discuss our culture's problems in terms of economy, in terms of politics, in terms of the environment, in any terms other than racial discrimination. Yet discrimination lies at the root of every problem. It is *always* about race. This lie that we have overcome racism, only serves to marginalize those who protest it is untrue, and to discredit the proof that racism exists solely because it doesn't fit the desired paradigm.

We can't continue to walk on eggshells, protective of the feelings of others. We can't lie to get along. We have real work to do, changing our perspective and manifesting a new society. We have to break through the old paradigm and forge an entirely new vision that works for all. We have to relinquish victimhood and come into our full potential. We have to stop being perpetrators and reach out to heal instead. God is not a big daddy in the sky, judging us and granting our fantasies only if we are free of sin or pray in a suitably humble manner.

Our goal can no longer be a new expensive sports car; we need to contribute to the evolution of culture, and even of spirituality. No one can tell us today, what it looks like when we realize our spiritual destiny. We are feeling called to lead and to create a future that we have yet to truly envision. The deeper desires we are holding become the template for our creative manifestations. We start today, leaning into the next obvious

step, knowing the path will be revealed only as we move forward. We don't wait for perfection, or a plan. We identify habitual patterns of behavior and question their validity in the new world. Whenever necessary, we discard the old ways, and take up the new.

I have written the politically correct versions of many of these ideas before. But while trying not to offend, truth falls away. Too many people today say, "I want to help the environment, but not if it changes my life too much or is too expensive." We don't question the assumptions that underlie our society, like 'we are separate', 'there is no alternative to how modern society runs', 'we can't do it if it will be bad for business', and 'oil will always be cheap'. We check to see if the stock markets' rally continued today, without questioning that paradoxically more people live in poverty and that more are homeless, than at any time we can remember.

We live in a society that is far from just. We recite the Pledge of Allegiance without examining what it means when we say: "... with liberty and justice, for all." We buy goods that are manufactured outside of our country, yet complain about how outsourcing has cost our neighbors their jobs. We use oil to fuel our vehicles and complain about the price of gas when it exceeds \$4 per gallon, while sipping our \$32 per gallon Starbucks coffee that we purchased in the drive-thru.

We ignore the unsustainable production methods that grew the coffee, the less-than-living wages paid to the children who harvested the coffee, and the pollution caused by multinational oil companies drilling the crude that transported the beans after dislocating native populations to silence their complaints. We fail to be concerned about the coal miners who pay the ultimate price, their lives, to provide the fuel for the electrical generator that powers the coffee urn, or the radioactive coal ash that is used in household furnishings after the coal is burned, or the CO₂ that fills the air from the coal-burning process. We don't factor the cost of health care for the coffee shop worker, who makes the minimum wage to serve us, into the price we paid for our steaming cup of flavored water. We throw the cup in a bin after 20 minutes and know that it will be carted out of sight and out of our neighborhood for disposal, to remain forever in someone else's community. But heaven forbid we should have to pay more for our ritual morning cup of coffee, in order to address these issues.

How can we begin to craft relationships that allow us to blossom into the beings we know ourselves to be, deep inside our hearts? When will we question the habitual reactions that allow us to move through life on autopilot and begin instead to act in ways that are appropriate in each and every situation? Can we begin to speak truth to

power, truth to each other, and truth to ourselves? Where can we find the strength to push past our comfort zone into ways of being that celebrate diversity and evolving, conscious awareness? We can't possibly know today exactly how my Self and your Self will ultimately reunite and manifest justice and equality and sufficiency and sustainability in the world. Can we share ourselves honestly and completely and ask that others join us in partnership? What will it take before we begin to relate within this shared vision instead of within the victim/perpetrator paradigm that now permeates our society?

America is Dead pushes into issues of social justice in order to begin creating a future that addresses the fundamental dysfunctions we see around us today. This inquiry is for the few percent of people in developed countries who see some faults in the post-modern, capitalistic and democratic models. We know from history that only a handful of enlightened minds are needed to effect great societal change. Fewer than 1,000 people contributed to the fabled Renaissance. But what is required is developing the skill of being open to change, and a willingness to adopt change for the good of the whole that may actually work against our own, individual best interests. We take self-responsibility to blossom, to develop for the benefit of all beings. We seek partnership, because we gain support from

others and our relationships mirror what is happening inside us. We do this work because it is just, because it is founded on Truth, and because it arises from love. It is only when we are willing to face what we have created and ask, “How can consciousness grow?” that we find answers to the problems we confront today.

Are you aware that you are practicing habitual thoughts? Are you ready and willing to move beyond them? Are you ready to join our most important conversation?

5 Stages of Racism: Where Are We?

Believe me, I'm a humble man. I don't feel all self-important when people tell me my grandson looks just like me, and that he's a very handsome man. It's true we look like twins, though we're 45 years apart. People focus on his looks because they can't say much about his mind. Don't take this wrong; he's only average smart. We all tend to think of our children and grandchildren as bein' smarter than average, forgettin' that average is just another way of sayin' most. My grandson ain't dumb, he just ain't too smart. And me? Just like him, I never finished high school.

And like the average young black man living in any inner city, he had little to do with his spare time. There ain't a lot of after-school activities, even for the few teens unlike him who manage to stay in school. These days, not like when I was goin', kids don't see the point of stickin' around for a graduation that may not even guarantee them a job at the local 7-11. And so, just like my grandson, they end up hangin' on some street corner, watchin' the police drive back and forth.

In our scattered, and very difficult conversations in the visiting room of the jail after his arrest, Jules told me each and every time that he had nothing to do with that young girl's death. That I believe; he's not a monster that has no feelings for women or that tears wings off of flies. He also told me every time who did do that nasty business, but he could never point me to any proof of it. Jules is 16, but they still decided to send him to adult court and prison. His story, as he told it to me more than once, goes like this:

"We had nothin' to do, like usual. Bobby (his friend, 2 years older than him) had just been fired from his job at a garage for comin' in late so we did what we always do, watch the drug sales goin' down outside the Stop-n-Go on 7th Street. Those big Navigators and Escalades, windows all tinted and shit, can't see nobody inside 'til the window rolls down and the suit drivin' peels hundreds off a roll thick as your arm to buy his next taste of heaven...

"Then Malcolm rolls up, asks if we wanna go over the bridge and maybe get some beer and watch the sunset out over the beach. Sure, why not? I didn't even see the white boy until I got in the back, honest Grandpa.

“Traffic was the usual, stop-n-go all the way across ‘til we get to 29th and Beach. The white boy asked for money to buy the beer, said since he was old enough to buy, we had to pay if we wanted to drink. I didn’t have any, I stayed quiet and let Bobby and Malcolm give him some cash. I didn’t have but one can, I tell you for sure, and only ‘cause Bobby told me I had to. Honest. We drove out to the view and watched the sun go down, white boy didn’t say too much, just Bobby and Malcolm acting all cool and shit. Me, I didn’t say one word the whole time.

“Bout an hour after sundown, this girl comes walkin’ long. White boy gets all hot and starts whistlin’ and shoutin’ at her. Tries to get her to come over to the car, then he gets out and chases after her down the sidewalk. Like he knew her from before, not like he’s angry or nothin’, just like he wants into her pants is all. He follows her and after about 10 minutes, he don’t come back, we leave his ass and come back home.”

Now, I don’t expect that you will just take his word for this, but you gotta understand, when the cops came knockin’ on my door at 3 am that morning, to “question” Jules about his ride over the bridge and all, he told them the same thing he told me. Of course,

everyone figures the cops, they don't just arrest innocent kids for murder and all. If they pick you up they got good reason for it. But I gotta ask you, when you find a body, and the trail leads you to a white boy with blood on his shirt and his pants, and he points a finger at my 16-year old grandson, how does that work, exactly? They be making all these arrests on TV usin' DNA and all that, where's the DNA testing in this case? Ain't none, I tell you, 'cause the cops ain't got no reason to want to know that white boy over there done this dirty business, and even after I mortgage my home to pay for legal bills, there ain't enough left over for payin' no laboratory. Not a tiny bit of proof my Jules was anywhere near that girl. But he's doin' life in prison all the same. A 16-year-old, balled up and thrown away like a piece of garbage. [chokes back a sob] So what if his Momma got hooked shortly before he was born, couldn't take care of him like she shoulda... ain't no reason to punish the boy for the crimes of the family; ain't no reason to make shit up about my Jules. But then, what... do... you... expect from white cops?

I am so tired: tired of explainin' to blacks how my grandson is innocent, though they tend to believe me. Tired of explainin' to whites that he's innocent,

and having them quickly turn away and shake their head, “sure he is”. Tired of tryin’ to find some lawyer to help get Jules out. Tired of payin’ the bills for a legal defense that wasn’t even half-assed. Tired of seein’ other kids in my neighborhood go to jail for no reason, and tired of empathizing with their parents. Tired of worryin’ how Jules is managin’ to get by in that prison for adults. He’s just a scared, scared kid.

But most of all, I’m just tired of missin’ my grandson.

Racism—the systemic imposition of a presumed white superiority (at the subjective/cultural level) and the systematic oppression of blacks by whites (at the objective/institutional level)—does have very negative effects on both blacks and whites in our societies, especially at the personal level (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of being). For blacks, the obvious disadvantages of lower status include racial profiling, an inability to get housing, jobs, decent education, and other economic opportunities due solely to skin color, etc. For whites, the disadvantages are less obvious; they tend to benefit from being the advantaged race. Still, racism is primarily about perpetuating the ruling class, and so it controls the many for the benefit of the few;

and few whites are in the ruling class. Whites tend live in fear of the 'other', to feel justified when they discriminate, and to remain ignorant of how their culture marginalizes other races. Whites also tend to believe that each person has control and responsibility for their actions and stature in the culture; this ignores how oppression robs the victim of any power to change or develop. Therefore whites tend to dismiss other races as lazy or ignorant, when in fact, it is the system that is the problem.

These examples illustrate how each of us, personally, perpetuate or experience individual limitations as a result of our socialization in, and acculturation into, the prevailing cultural norms regarding race identity.

Hardiman & Jackson's social group identity development model (1997) has five developmental stages. The first, the "naïve" stage, is where as very young children we have no awareness of racial differences and, therefore, have not yet developed an identity as a "white" or a "black." The second stage is "acceptance," where we psychologically internalize the prevailing social norms regarding race within the dominant culture thus accepting or taking on ideas, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and values of whiteness and domination as part of our core identity or self system. Note that during the acceptance stage, both whites and blacks internalize ideas, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors

and values concerning race that are “acceptable” within white-dominant society. This stage continues throughout childhood and, typically, into adulthood.

As we mature, we may face events that make us aware of contradictions between how we were raised and what we now think, believe, and feel. We may begin to ask ourselves about what it means to be a certain race. Some whites are coming into the third stage of racial identity development. We enter the “resistance” stage when our racial group identity develops to where we are capable of realizing: “Hey! Just wait a minute here! I know that this is what I learned about being white (or black), and this is what is expected of me as such by family and friends and employers and community and institutions and society at large. But this is NOT really or totally who I am! No! I RESIST!”

The resistance stage, however, presents some significant and difficult challenges. The first one is that this realization tends to get people pissed off. Making others angry puts us in danger, and a normal and healthy neural-physiologic reaction to perceived or imagined danger is to contract emotionally, withdraw relationally and, far too often, to prepare for flight or battle. This emotional contraction also comes with its cognitive counterpart, which in racial contexts tends to be that we get stuck in the “me”: in our individual experience and perspective. If

these felt experiences and partial perspectives are combined with a lack of emotional and social intelligence to address that which triggered these feelings (after all, in white culture, we are not encouraged to examine and manage our feelings), it is not difficult for us to arrive at the “logical conclusion” that “Hey, I am the victim here.” As just one example, witness the ongoing backlash against affirmative action programs.

Now, with time, as we become aware that it is blacks that are, in fact, the primary and intended victims of this racial power arrangement, we then become capable of realizing that “Well, I, too, have been hurt by racism.” As our consciousness within this stage of resistance to dominant culture develops further, and we also begin to perceive, recognize and understand how the ideological and behavioral patterns of socially constructed white supremacy are played out in and around us, we then may become more fully capable of a profound insight: “We, whites, collectively, all of us, have been hoodwinked by racism, white supremacy and domination! Just like blacks, though quite differently!”

It can be nearly impossible for whites to identify ways in which they have benefited from the structural racism within society, a

problem referred to as *white privilege*.

Examples³⁵ of this include:

- I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
- The dominant paradigm of physical beauty in my culture is a person of my race.
- I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge", I will be facing a person of my own race.

³⁵ Modified from an essay that is excerpted from Working Paper 189. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" (1988), by Peggy McIntosh; available for \$4.00 from the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley MA 02181. Peggy McIntosh is associate director of the Wellesley Collage Center for Research on Women.

- If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it had racial overtones.
- I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.

However, there is a problem in confusing or mistaking a white's felt sense of "powerlessness" with "oppression." To be clear, when we (including anti-oppression scholars and practitioners) define "power," we try to be very explicit in the difference between "personal power" and "structural or institutional power." So, when we make statements such as "Blacks are the victims of the racist oppression of whites," what we are stating is that an overarching historical pattern—a general rule and operating principle within our society—is that blacks collectively have been excluded, exploited, underserved and misrepresented by the systems and institutions that were created and are controlled, to this day, by whites as a group, collectively. What is being named here is that **racist oppression** is the dynamic of **institutional power** that overwhelmingly has benefited whites at the expense of blacks. It is certainly NOT about a black's **personal power** as an individual to

resist the psychological internalization of their presumed inferiority to whites nor is it about their **collective power** as a movement to struggle to change institutional practices that perpetuate inequitable outcomes for blacks as a racial group. Oppression must be named and pointed out by those most affected by it; by the people of color who suffer from it, rather than by whites that, consciously or unconsciously, express it. Whites have a tendency to either disbelieve that anything they do or say can be interpreted as racist. Often they encourage the abused to “let it go” when their racism is identified³⁶, which is one way to dismiss the victim’s experience. Small comments, no matter the intention, can have quite dramatic psychological effects on the recipient, and can lead to inequities in education, employment, and even health.

So when, as whites, we experience a felt sense of “powerlessness” it is important that we clearly examine what we’re really talking about. Are we talking about how we are limited and hurt by the culture of white dominance and our own participation with racist oppression? Or are we talking about

³⁶ Example: an employer says to a job applicant who is a person of color, “I believe that the most qualified candidate should get the job.” Is this to be interpreted as saying that people of color are not qualified? Or that if they get a job, it will be because of their color and not their abilities and skills? Is it seen by the applicant as part of a continuing pattern, even though it is an isolated incident for the employer?

how, in spite of the privileges conferred upon us by virtue of being white, that we still may not enjoy full participation, access and power in society to get our needs met; by virtue of being poor, working or middle class, or because we are Muslim, or of our membership in one of the other subordinated, and truly oppressed, racial or gender-identity groups? The complexities of racial identity are enormous. So, before we start making statements like “Whites are being oppressed,” let’s remember what words like “power,” “powerlessness,” or even “empowerment” really mean.

Of course, in this culture that prizes personal empowerment and responsibility, we believe we can attempt to redefine what “power” means, and perhaps we even dare to redefine what “black power” is. We might even try to instruct blacks on the true quality, nature, and meaning of their experience. After all, a key pattern of white’s cultural dominance and institutional power has been, precisely, to define reality and, then, redefine it as is convenient to our purposes of maintaining power and privilege. But hopefully you understand that you cannot single-handedly redefine these important sociological concepts.

Having resisted and rejected the definition imposed collectively onto us as race-identified beings, and after collectively coming to deeply understand just how we as “white” figure into the complex dynamics of

social and institutional power, we can begin to move into the redefinition stage of social identity development. The clearer we are about just how we have been hurt—and in some measure, dehumanized—by cultural racism and by our unconscious and unintentional participation in the racist oppression of blacks, the more we can effectively and positively and collectively move toward redefining what it is to be “a *real human*”. And while this is a process to be undertaken and led by whites, given the unconscious nature of our internalized racist patterns of thought and behavior and the need for us to find new ways of relating to all people of color, it is absolutely necessary that we undertake this process with the strong support and wise guidance of blacks who have also traveled the developmental process of healing from internalized racial oppression.

Through our struggle with other whites in redefinition and our intentional relationship to conscious and truly liberated blacks, we can move to the internalization stage. In this fifth stage, a new definition of *human* and new patterns of thought, feeling and behavior in relationship to blacks and to all other races, become progressively second nature (true nature?), below our conscious awareness. Not that we cannot and will not slip back to old racist patterns; remember, to transcend means to embrace the old while

including the new, and all of it is ever-present.

Understanding racial identity development, social power and oppression at all levels, stages, perspectives, perceptual positions and dimensions is a centrally important, and usually overlooked, aspect of the evolution of our collective consciousness. I believe understanding gender, race, culture, class and other social power dynamics can facilitate movement into a new collective consciousness. Actually, I suspect our survival as a species ultimately depends on it.

More importantly, however, all of the major issues of our time: from personal health problems to health care policies, from the global economic crisis to climate change, from local politics to foreign wars, all are either caused by oppression in its many forms or are compounded by it. Without a doubt, viable and sustainable solutions to the problems of humanity, and to our survival, cannot be reached and implemented without true liberation from oppression and the radical transformation of human culture, as we know it.

It's difficult to bring up this idea of *white privilege*: as white people, we don't think about it, we don't have it in our face every time we meet a white person, we don't have a language to use to talk about it, and we don't understand, at a fundamental, visceral level,

what it means or looks like. Have you felt uncomfortable, felt a conflict that hurt deep inside your heart, in situations where other people were suffering from injustice or racism, and you felt that saying something would mean, according to society, that something was wrong *with you*? If so, then you are closer to understanding this than most.

The Industrial Revolution has devastated the planet, but it has devastated people, too. Can our next movement, the next revolution of enterprise and industry and economic engagement, honor the earth and every living being on it? Can we build a society that is not about charity, or guilt or shame? This is important, because if we don't include all voices, we won't survive. It may seem selfish, but we need to include all points of view, or we ourselves will die, along with everyone else. But to be effective in challenging the white privilege paradigm, we have to confront that small voice inside, the one that says, "I deserve what I have, because I earned it." Really? Do you deserve more salary than a person of color with the exact same resume? Do you deserve a job interview, because your name sounds white, not black? Do you deserve a better job because you went to a better high school, and better college, thanks to an uneven distribution of funding that favored white neighborhoods over black? Do you deserve to live in a better house in a better

neighborhood, because your family has been able to own property and accumulate wealth far longer than the average black family? How can we know what a person is capable of, until their family has had a few generations of equal education, equal access to any vocation, and equal resources to be creative?

I have long recommended that every person spend a significant amount of time outside his or her native land, to experience a different perspective, a different culture. In truth, in any large American city, there is already a world of cultural difference. What we call *diversity* is actually a series of bubbles that touch, like foam. In your city, there is a Chinatown, a section where Mexicans live together, your own neighborhood, poorer sections and richer ones. Each is its own sphere of influence, and from within our own bubble we don't share experiences with people in others nearby. We don't get outside our own bubble. We may notice who's nearby, but we don't listen to their experiences. White privilege reinterprets this situation and makes it not about your inability to hear, but about other people's inability to speak. Put another way, when there is a breakdown in communication between white and black, the culture places the blame not on a problem with white listening, rather it points to a problem with black speech. "Why are they so angry", for instance. Or if there's no anger

expressed, we then say, “that one’s very eloquent or articulate”, with the rest of the sentence unspoken, “...for his race.” The onus is on the speaker to make or break the co-communication. We turn down the volume or look the other way, when certain truths are being spoken. It took a world-class orator, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to explain and call out the racism in the apartheid, Jim Crow segregation that was overt and rampant in this country just 50 years ago.

Understand this point, and all doors open to you. Putting it to use requires an ability to stay present, even when it is difficult or painful. This only happens if you have a deeply grounded meditation or other contemplative spiritual practice. Without being able to *witness* the experience of another, to listen deeply and to hear not only the words but the underlying emotions and the perspectives they have engendered without judging or dismissing them, we cannot taste our humanity. We have all been robbed of our ability to stand as one with the *human family*: to know, to celebrate, and to love *every* human being. Do you see that you can be both privileged, and hurt? Both powerful, and scared? How do you get to be whole? When did (or can) you spend time in a black community?

Who am I? Where do I fit? How do I get along? These questions are painful, and hard to answer. We are also not given permission

within our society to talk openly about these questions. Do you have good answers, answers that you are willing to share with others? Or are you so caught up in living, that it would be hard to articulate what is current for you? We are often afraid that the conversation will turn out badly. If we speak about these things, we might be called racist, for things we say or do innocently enough. It's hard for whites to hear the pain of subjugated people. Not everyone can buy a hybrid car; some are struggling just to find bus fare. Not everyone can afford solar panels on their roof; some people don't have a roof over their heads, even a rented one. In your town, there are two- and three-year olds who, if you show them flowers, or balloons, will start to cry: they assume there must be another funeral. Would that have been you're first thought, upon seeing flowers? It's easy to judge as inferior or deficient, people who have a different perspective than your own. Are you ready to have this conversation? Is our heart, and our way of being, big enough to include everyone?

And it's not just about learning, it's also about unlearning the constant, daily, minute-by-minute stream of messages sent from every source of news and information; that white is good, and color is bad. It's about being, and being *with*, rather than doing something to fix a 'problem'. There's no one around who is poor, or black or brown, because you live in a white

neighborhood, you say? Really? Someone is doing the work; the richer the neighborhood, the more work gets done by hired help. Put down the white mantel that says you have to fix everything, and understand that in every community, the first step to fixing anything is to listen and learn. Then you can help effectively, once you understand.

It is often said that to solve the problem of terrorism, we need to understand what motivates terrorists. It is not easy to understand, on a visceral, emotional level, how rage arising from an injustice perpetrated against an ancestor long dead can persist for decades or even centuries. This is the power of story, oral histories passed from parent to child. But we also are protected from understanding even fresh, new wounds and the rage they can cause if we are unable to listen effectively. Van Jones tells a story, paraphrased here, to answer a question about why blacks often seem angry and unwilling to accept help from well-intentioned whites.

In 1964, a few white people and black people joined together in what was called *Freedom Summer*, an effort to register black citizens to vote in the deeply segregated South. There was violence; people, both white and black, were beaten, raped, imprisoned and in some cases, killed. This became front-page news around the country. And yet, even after large numbers of

blacks had been registered for the first time, and registered as Democrats, when the Democratic National Convention opened, the racist, white delegations from the southern states were seated on the convention floor. The blacks were shut out, although offered a token two seats, in the rear of the auditorium, by then-President Johnson. The *liberal, Democratic* Party, notice, accepted the gift of a great registration drive, but offered no voice at the convention for it's new members. Despite laying lives on the line, blacks were given no power from the dominant race, and the stated reason was based entirely on white political expediency. Is it any wonder, then, that in the years that followed we experienced the rise of the Black Panther Party? Or race riots in many American cities? And because this is a history that is not *white history*, you can be forgiven for not knowing it, as the current culture even segregates history. If you want to learn about history from a black perspective, you won't find it in any normal high school history class. You'll have to find it on your own. But do you think for one moment, that blacks have forgotten this great betrayal? Why should they trust white people again? What could we offer them, in return

for laying their lives on the line, that they can trust we will deliver and make their sacrifice worthwhile? These are the kinds of dilemmas that face anyone trying to be inclusive in their endeavors. If we expect blacks to give up their anger, we have to give up something too: our belief that we can remain ignorant about the crimes that have been perpetrated in our name.

What Is Social Justice?

The man sat quietly, motionless, on the bus stop bench. He looked to be about 50 years old, his clothes were clean but looked tired, as if they had been washed hundreds of times. His shoulders drooped, his arms were crossed on his chest, and his eyes seemed to focus on the curb just beyond his feet. I watched from my table at an outdoor café across the street as bus after bus stopped and moved on; each time the man remained sitting, not noticing the world around him, lost in thought. I could not know, without breaking into his reverie, that he had just this morning been told that he was no longer needed at the nearby car wash. “Business is down,” the owner had said, “and I have to let some of you go.” He had worked there for seven years, and while it is true he may not be as fast reaching into the many nooks and crannies of modern cars with the vacuum hose as some of the younger guys, or that his back ached after just a few hours drying cars with the towels still warm from the dryer and he found himself standing and resting more frequently, he was still able to do his work effectively. He was stunned when he found his name on the list of those who would be fired the owner had pinned to the bulletin board in the employee break area, a list that did not contain the names of any of the

young white men that worked there. It had taken all his strength to avoid crumpling to the ground in a ball, all his willpower not to cry, and all his pride to swallow his anger and walk to the office to collect his final paycheck. How could he tell his wife, that this was to be his last paycheck for who knows how long? How would they eat, pay the rent, and keep the electricity and heat on during the fast-approaching winter months? How could someone his age find work when so many others, even some with a college education (unlike him), pounced on the few open jobs?

Knowing the man's story, why he sits there immobilized by fear and shame and grief, do you see any injustice in his situation? Are you quick to defend the car wash owner, who after all, is entitled to make a profit even if that means taking jobs from loyal, decent employees? Do you question the assumption that he will have a hard time finding work, being 50 years old? Do you believe that in America today, any decision about which workers to layoff ignores race? Do you decide that he only has himself to blame, not having gone to college, and put him out of your mind? Do you blame the current economic downturn, and feel that society or government should offer the man and his family some assistance? Did you also assume, until I mentioned the note on the bulletin board, that the man I was describing was white?

Or because he is uneducated, that he must be a minority? Would your suggested 'remedy' for his situation: better education, more job training programs, stricter affirmative action laws, or increased unemployment benefit programs, be different if he were Hispanic, Asian, Caucasian or African American?

What is social justice? Here's one answer to this question, from Van Jones³⁷:

“A socially just world is a world in which, if you had to draw a lot, and it would put you anywhere in that society, you would feel perfectly confident; you wouldn't be worried, because you knew whatever lot you drew would be a good lot. It doesn't mean everything's equal. It just means that every single person in that society has a decent shot at living the fullest life that they can. But if you close your eyes and you think to yourself, would you trade places? Well, if you wouldn't trade places, then there's work to be done.”

What is Mr. Jones pointing to here? Wage inequality, gender inequality, racial inequality, class inequality come immediately to mind. Today, America faces

³⁷ *Author; Founder, Green For All*

problems with all of these aspects of social justice, and more besides. The world faces the injustice of climate change, possibly caused by the wealthiest nations in the Northern hemisphere, an injustice that will afflict the poor nations first and worst. And while you may be excused for thinking that America is the greatest nation on Earth, and that citizens here live in the most just society there is, for many of these issues you would be wrong. And regardless of wrong or right, do you fall into the trap of thinking:

- that ‘there is no alternative’?
- that day care workers should always get paid less than plumbers, and far, far less than hedge fund managers?
- that American culture already celebrates diversity as much as possible?
- that the reason the neighborhood in your town, the one that you would never consider buying property in, is *that* rundown because only lazy people live there?

The legacy of genocide, the legacy of colonialism, the legacy of racism lives on in the fabric of our society. It can be seen in the ways of social *injustice*. It manifests as violence towards women, towards others ‘not of our tribe’, and towards the earth. Colonists, who arrived in a land of plenty yet nearly starved to extinction in their first months and years here, founded our

American society. Bringing with them an incorrect expectation that the farming methods and crops of England would easily transplant to the new land, they quickly found themselves without food to eat. It wasn't until the native people stepped forward and began to teach the colonists about the abundant, yet foreign, sources of food that surrounded them that they were able to establish a new culture and begin to develop. They went on in subsequent decades and generations to ravage the local populations across the continent, pushing them aside and commandeering nearly all of the land with little or no compensation. Can anyone point to any treaty signed between the American government and the native people that was honored in spirit or in fact? American land was stolen; genocide was the primary means of the theft. Domination and exploitation are at the root of both our government and our economy. We claim to cherish freedom and justice, but we look the other way, or fall victim to the lies and techniques of distraction purveyed by media and authorities, while our freedom is taken away and injustice destroys the lives of those around us. We remain unconscious to these travesties, because we have accepted the notion that our lives will always be better once we have purchased the latest gadget, a bigger house, or a faster car. We place our focus on gaining material wealth, thinking that will make us happy, rather than on

finding a simple, direct and more spiritual path that leads us to inner peace and rewarding relationships. We so value growth, equating it with success, that we are willing to mortgage our future by borrowing to consume more, to prevent lower prices (deflation) or to head off a shrinking economy (recession).

Social justice addresses, even beyond the major issues identified above, a myriad of problems:

- The inequity apparent in our criminal justice and prison systems
- Increasing globalization causes disruption here at home
- The widening gap between rich and poor
- How climate change will be felt by the poorest first, and how they lack the resources necessary to effectively cope with the change.
- How domestic violence is an overt expression of our personal sense of separation from others and from nature
- The role played by government, media and religion in perpetuating injustice
- How education is a key component of any remedies of injustice, yet is sadly deficient in our system today
- That today more people are victims of human trafficking (what we used to

call slavery) than at any other time in the world's history

- How cheap consumer goods, and our demand that we are entitled to save as much money as possible in every transaction, pushes the issues of pollution, low wages and other social costs onto someone else in some other country, while putting hundreds of thousands of people out of work here in America
- How programs to address injustice often create a sense of entitlement or dependence, rather than fostering freedom and justice

What happens when cars, and houses, and jobs don't matter anymore? When you are facing your last minutes in this body, what is most important to you? Answers to these questions consistently focus on love and relationship, on family and friends, on the opportunities to express love that were the high points of our lives, and on regrets for the chances to express love that eluded us. Across the world, in all societies, these values hold supreme. All kids are filled with curiosity and wonder as they explore nature. They make up rules and play endless games with each other as they learn about the world, no matter what culture they find themselves in. It is an inherent human trait, this awe with which we each begin our

exploration of life. Parents want their children to grow up healthy, happy and able to live an easier life than they had themselves. It is only because we are raised into a society that is rooted in exploitation and domination that we learn to look the other way as those around us are treated unjustly. It is only because we believe there is no alternative that we continue to oppress others in our own, daily actions. If we could only see an alternate path, most of us would gladly jump at the chance to build a cooperative, fair and just society.

What is social justice? One aspect centers on what is essentially ethical behavior. Acting from a sound moral foundation, we treat others fairly, and with the respect due to each individual. We do not lie or manipulate others. We stand by our word; we maintain our reputation as a good and decent human being, one who truly cares about the well being of others. We know deep inside our hearts for example, that it is morally reprehensible to test a new drug on humans without a reasonable belief that it will be safe, and without their explicit consent. Yet we look the other way as manufacturing processes develop new chemical compounds that, after use, are dumped down drains or left in unlined catchments and allowed to migrate into food and/or water supplies. In other words, we all become the test subjects, without giving our

consent, to see what effects these new chemicals will have on our bodies. The corporation may protest, 'It's too costly to test every substance. How can we make a profit if we have to contain and detoxify our wastes? What makes you think it is our waste products that are bringing illness or cancer to this neighborhood³⁸?' An effective indicator of which neighborhoods have parks and which have toxic waste dumps has been, historically in America, race and class³⁹. This is definitely *not* justice, nor is it ethically right.

³⁸ Look no further for proof of this statement than the hundreds of chemicals used during the hydraulic fracturing technique of gas extraction, commonly called 'fracking'. Untested and unnamed, these chemicals and the interactions between them may already be causing illness and death, but there is no regulation or attempt to discover the truth: it is deemed to be "too expensive" to know their impact for certain.

³⁹ The Commission for Racial Justice's landmark study, *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States*, found race to be the single most important factor (i.e. more important than income, home ownership rate, and property values) in determining the location of abandoned toxic waste sites. The study also found that: three out of five African Americans live in communities with abandoned toxic waste sites; 60% (15 million) African Americans live in communities with at least one abandoned toxic waste site; three of the five largest commercial hazardous waste landfills are located in predominantly African American or Latino American communities and account for 40% of the nation's total estimated toxic landfill capacity

We will continue to explore the many facets of social justice throughout this book. First, however, let's take a look at how our own unique perspective can have a pivotal role in helping us root out injustice in our lives.

Social Justice and Me

It is easy to feel separate, alone in this vast Universe, an isolated entity flitting from role to role throughout our days. Our skin forms a seemingly firm barrier that defines *me* vs. *everything outside of me*. Our ego, that monkey-mind chattering away during every waking moment inside our mind, focuses on how *I* am relating to that everything outside and trying desperately to be happy while staying safe. The ease of this attempt depends largely on our perspective, on our belief in the type of Universe we inhabit. If it is a *good* Universe, we are likely to find happiness in most of our endeavors, if it is a *bad* one, we may harbor deep feelings of victimization or repression, or display great anger and violence in self-defense. In either case, we are likely to feel a need to protect ourselves from the thoughtless acts of others, and we often feel paranoia that others will manipulate us, take what belongs to us, take advantage of us, or even try to kill us. Even if we feel the universe is safe, we hardly think it is *fair*.

But is it true, that we are separate beings? Throughout history, almost as a mantra, a few people have held firmly to the belief that “*We Are One*”. Despite the obvious indicators that ‘I’ exist and function as a single unit in the great machine of society,

can greater awareness of my inner being, my soul, lead me to a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings? Will I find greater satisfaction, greater success and increased feelings of love and understanding, if I can reach this sense of oneness with the Universe? Will I find life to be more fulfilling? Will I tap a source of greater compassion, and find the energy to create a more just and sustaining world for everyone?

You may be having a difficult time with the concept that “*We Are One*”. Especially within the American culture, we are raised to believe that matter is solid, and that we have control over some portion of our environment. Our sense of individuality is not only deeply ingrained and taught to us from our first days on this planet, but also celebrated and renowned worldwide. Many of us are groomed for leadership positions, at work or within society, further perpetuating the myth that we can control anything. Most of us were also taught to judge: to judge other people, to judge situations, and most of all, to judge ourselves. If matter is solid, and we have control over others and events, and we can judge someone to be wrong and ourselves to be right, then the phrase “*We Are One*” does not make any sense.

As science peels away the layers of the structure of matter, it is becoming clear that the Universe is ultimately an energy flux, and there are no distinct separations between one part and another. String theory and

quantum physics both describe a Universe that is just a continuous flow of energy at its most fundamental level. We are beginning to grasp what it means when science shows us that atoms are 99.99% space, containing very little actual matter. This shows that seemingly solid barriers, such as we seem to perceive between our skin and the outside world, are actually extremely porous and nearly arbitrary boundaries. We are permeable. Most of the molecules in our bodies are water. We take in water primarily by drinking and eating and we lose water through various means, breathing, sweating and elimination. Seen from one perspective, water flows from the *outside* environment into us and back out again, and the water that is held within my own body in this moment was possibly in your body a few days ago. In the world's oceans, by comparison, there are currents such as the Gulf Stream, in constant motion. The water within a particular stream may have slightly different properties; the salinity and temperature and movement energy may be distinct compared to ocean water outside the stream, for instance. But it is still water, just like all the remaining fluid that makes up our oceans. You have actually breathed at least one molecule of oxygen that was formed billions of years ago during the death of a star and later breathed by Jesus, or the Buddha. Our world is energy in circulation. Our bodies may seem to be individual and

separate, but really we are just slightly different manifestations of the same Universal energy that makes up everything.

Does it serve us to ignore this ultimate reality? If we are separate beings, we are subject to feelings of pride and control, and we draw comparisons between other separate entities and then make judgments about what we see. We criticize ourselves needlessly if we don't conform to certain standards, usually standards set by those who seek to control us. We assume that people or events are *good* or *evil* and we suffer when evil enters our lives. We fear being *alone*, because we fear the loss of love, or the loss of connection to those we cherish. We have no sense that we embody love, and often feel no abiding connection with any higher power. We suffer when events happen that we believe are our fault, either by inaction or incorrect action. We suffer when events happen that we had no part of, that deprive us of people or things we cherish. None of these outcomes engenders feelings of love and connection with the Universal energy. All of these feelings and beliefs can lead us to violence and chaos, or to perpetrate injustice on others.

Our brain uses about the same amount of energy as the 20-watt light bulb in your refrigerator. It's no wonder that it looks for operational efficiency, and falls back on patterns and knee-jerk reactions that allow us to act with as little thought as possible.

We tend to limit our emotions to those that we have habitually used, that have served us in similar situations in the past, without giving a thought to whether a different emotion might be more useful today. When we are cut off on the freeway for instance, we can react with a variety of emotions, some helpful and some not. There is no inherent or required emotion at that moment; we can be angry or loving, impatient or calm. We fail to grasp a key concept: that no one can hurt me; only I can hurt myself with what I choose to believe to be true in this moment. I can make up a story that says that idiot driver who cut in front of me has wronged me, and thus justify my anger. Or I could remind myself that I want to finish listening to this audio book by the end of the week, and slowing down gives me more time to listen, and thus stay calm. This means that I can ease the pain, no matter the situation; by questioning the truth of what I believe is causing the pain. Following the death of a loved one, I can focus on the loss, the impossibility of ever sharing another enjoyable moment of love with this person, and grieve their loss with feelings of anguish and pain. I can descend into depression, possibly to the point where I become dysfunctional. Or I can celebrate and give thanks that their energy has become part of me, has helped to create the perspective through which I perceive this world. I can recognize that they are in my heart, always,

and that their influence on me is evident in my behavior, if I just look closely.

When we want to believe a particular thought or emotion, we look for any evidence we can find that proves it to be true. We will ignore evidence to the contrary; we are only interested in being *right*. Our subconscious mind will even join the search, screening the inputs from our senses, looking for proof that our ego is right. Experiments repeatedly show that we see what we expect to see, and we have difficulty seeing anything that is new or unexpected⁴⁰. And where do we learn to see? We learn from our parents and early caregivers, when everyone and everything was named for us, and we were told what meaning to place on people, places and things. If our instruction taught us that injustice was just part of the world, we will continue to perpetrate injustice because we don't question that there might be another alternative, another way to see the world. We believe that our experiences prove the correctness of our worldview.

This doesn't mean that we must learn to ignore emotions, quite the contrary, we can embrace them. Our fault lies in resisting certain emotions as *unpleasant*, and in

⁴⁰ In one famous video available on the Internet, groups of people pass a ball around a circle while someone in an ape costume passes through the group. Most people, tasked with counting the number of times the ball is passed, are so focused on their job they fail to see the ape, until it is pointed out to them.

grasping at the same emotions habitually even at times when they are inappropriate. When pain arises, acknowledge pain, give it its voice so that you can learn what it can contribute to your viewpoint. Then let it go. When we focus on pain and try to push it away, try to make it stop, our resistance fuels the pain and it will settle in and stay awhile. We give it energy through our resistance. We get (or see) more of what we focus on. When we acknowledge the emotion with awareness, we find a small kernel of joy in the realization that we are *feeling* something. This is part of our underlying purpose for being here, on Earth, as a manifestation of Universal energy. We are eternal, spiritual beings having a temporary, human experience. It feels good to have *any* experience, without labeling it *good* or *bad*, without judging its merits or categorizing it according to its strength. It *is*, and that is enough. By allowing the feeling to be felt and recognized for what it is telling us, we deal with the situation in a healthy manner, we add the feeling into our experience in a meaningful way and we grow. Repressing the feeling ensures it will pop up again at a less appropriate time, like squeezing a small balloon in your hand: the balloon pops out between your fingers or bursts; you can't compress it successfully.

When we react from habit, we often find we achieve results that are less than satisfactory. Our ego fills us with fear of new situations,

precisely because it has no history to fall back on, no reaction that was demonstrated to work well in a similar situation before. It bombards us with potential calamitous outcomes, and we often turn away from a new adventure chock-full of learning and pleasure, only because our ego can't get past imagining the worst-case scenario. The emotion of fear is frequently unfounded, and upon close examination, quickly falls away.

Quantum physics shows us that matter is just energy with potential, not something definite or solid, until it is observed. It demonstrates that atoms can be *entangled*, meaning that one can be separated from its partner by millions of miles, and yet communicate instantaneously. It is increasingly demonstrating that Newtonian physics provides an incomplete understanding of reality. Recent experiments show that *awareness* is pivotal in determining the nature of some (if not all) energy, and even *whether something exists or not*. Initially, just a few decades ago, this property of matter was believed to affect only the smallest of the small, but with each passing year, the scale it is known to affect grows. There is even credible evidence today that awareness affects energy at the human scale⁴¹. We are beginning to understand that

⁴¹ Interestingly, on the spectrum that spans from the smallest bits of matter to the largest, humans fall right in the middle. Is your interior world, the atomic scale,

when we pluck at any string of life, the entire Web of Life resonates. If science tells us that awareness is crucial in existence, and religion tells us the same thing, can we begin to examine how our own awareness is affecting our life?

Naturally, when we begin to act from within a sense of connection with all that is, we find violence abhorrent. We grieve the loss of a species through extinction⁴² as we would grieve the loss of a neighbor. We feel the sense of separation that permeates our culture, fueling a greed that allows the rich few to enrich themselves beyond reason at the expense of the poorer masses, and we wish to grow beyond this limited perception of our selves. We seek justice, and we become sensitized to the many injustices that surround us. We see decades and centuries of struggle and violence persist because of our unwillingness to meet others on our shared and common ground. We feel rage as we witness our air and water, vital resources that we depend upon for our very survival, fouled beyond use, hoarded, or priced and sold by corporate and governmental policies and procedures. We feel hopeless to change

as deep and profound as the far reaches of the Universe, the cosmic scale?

⁴² We have only known of the idea of *extinction* for a few hundred years. It required the ability to pass down knowledge from several generations, knowledge that covered the entire globe, and the ability to see past the belief that a perfect God would never allow one of His creations to die out as if it was imperfect.

any of these issues, because we don't know how to awaken others or ourselves quickly. We assume we lack the power and resources to have effective influence in creating new policies and procedures, and we have few role models that show us an effective way to bring about meaningful change.

Once you begin to see your connection to the Universe in everyone, your heart opens and love and relationship become the dominant force for change and growth in your life. Love clearly becomes the focus of your energy and action. You happily give and receive love, radiating joy and peace, seeing the universe through eyes that seek relationship, not control or judgment. This is what gives life purpose and meaning. As we center ourselves within this ideal, we reach out to others in authentic ways, eager to cooperate. Acting from this center helps us share ourselves more easily, build consensus between our various networks, act with compassion and caring for people and species, and act in increasingly ethical ways.

Inevitably there will be times when differences arise, choices go wrong, or someone else is unable to respond to you with this same sense of love and connection. Right action implies that you respond to these situations by dropping your differences and trying everything you can to make things right between the two of you. Refrain from falling back into the old paradigm, and responding from anger or with deception

and manipulation. Ask, “How can I respond with love?” “What is the just way to treat this person?” or “How can I respect their point of view and still reach agreement?” rather than argue or become violent.

Begin slowly; opening up to those already close. As you find you are successful in deepening your close relationships through loving attention to others, begin to have more meaningful and deep conversations with a widening circle of friends and acquaintances, and eventually, strangers.

Jf I am separate, if there is me, and everything-else-not-me, then I give myself permission to use, alter, destroy, consume and manipulate everything outside of my small self. I struggle to maintain the illusion that I am in control, that I create what surrounds me. This is the root cause of the injustice we seek to overturn in our society today. But if instead, I am part of everything-that-is, if there is *only ever one of us* in the room, I find it difficult to hurt myself.

“It’s impossible for people to work together”, is that what you say? We already have many examples of how cooperation feeds our collective lives; airline travel is one. Travel between nations across the globe relies on a shared purpose and goal, and an ability to communicate both general needs (trade and security, for example) and details (landing patterns, current weather conditions, time zones, supplies and

schedules). Travel fosters freedom and aids business, and enhances our wellbeing by allowing us to establish and deepen personal relationships around the world. It works because we, the entire global community, agree that we want it to.

Nature depends upon cooperation to increase complexity. The classic example of several blind men touching various parts of an elephant illustrates this concept well. The diversity of information these men can contribute to each other allows the group to achieve greater understanding about the true nature of the elephant. Individually, they have a very limited perspective, one feels a trunk here, another touches a leg there, someone grasps the tail, etc. Putting all the information together, celebrating their diversity and cooperating with each other, they begin to grasp the complex being that stands before them. If they were instead to kill one another, their understanding would remain narrow and incomplete. Diversity and cooperation confers resilience, survivability and strength. It opens our eyes to injustice, and allows us to ensure that every person has the opportunity to contribute their own particular talents and insight to our community. This bringing together of diverse viewpoints, for the betterment of the whole of humanity, is why establishing social justice is vital to our future. It is when we limit diversity that we require pesticides to ensure the growth of

our crops, for example. A diverse field of crops will not collapse with the onset of one problem, yet a monoculture will. And as the farm goes, so goes the farmer and ultimately, society.

To foster the cooperation that will help us grow into a perspective of unity we can look to nature. The web of life that surrounds us teaches us many lessons:

- any level of Nature builds on the smaller level that precedes it, and that smaller level is incorporated into all the levels that follow it. From atom to molecule to compound to organism to family to neighborhood to nation to planet to solar system to universe, each level mirrors the others. When many levels align, we celebrate resonance. Atoms are mostly space, whirling around the nucleus, just as our planet moves through a mostly empty solar system and that solar system rotates inside a mostly empty universe. It is only at the level of our material world, where the bonds between molecules can be so strong that steel, water, or even skin appear to present a *solid* surface, that these similarities are not readily apparent.
- everything we see outside of ourselves is a reflection of our inner world: when I notice the stillness of a flower, I touch the stillness that already exists inside of me.

- we can only *see* limited portions of the energy spectrum. Scientists agree that we cannot see the majority of the energy in the Universe, today they call it *dark matter* and *dark energy*, belying the fact that we exist immersed in an energy soup. If using energy is what makes us *alive*, then the universe itself is alive, as well as our planet and our neighborhood. In nature, matter recycles, but energy continues. If we live in energy, or as energy made manifest, then what we call death is only moving into a different manifestation of that energy.
- we ourselves are *super organisms*, comprised of trillions of cells that work together in most cases, and occasionally, at cross-purposes. Scientists have recently realized that most of the cells in our bodies are not part of our bodies; rather they live within the *environment of* our bodies. Note what happens to our bodies when the life living within us stops living off the surplus and begins to eat into our finite resources... eventually we die. What happens when we extrapolate that knowledge into our larger Earth environment?
- God did not make the Earth and then later insert humans. All life on Earth is the result of more than 13 billion years of evolution. The salmon that

tries to jump dams in its return to its birthplace is just as much the end product of eons of change as Mankind, water, or trees. We are all life, to be respected and supported, not a *resource* to be hoarded, exploited or destroyed⁴³.

Can we learn from other cultures or lifestyles, and become open and receptive to new, more spiritual, ways of being? Witness the Muslim call to prayer, 5 times a day, during which every follower stops whatever he or she is doing in order to connect with their spiritual source. They demonstrate the importance of their beliefs by setting aside worldly concerns. They affirm that no matter what may be occupying their small self, it is not as important as reconnecting with their larger Self. They prove that Spirit is *what I am*, not *what I do*. When we fear others who are different, when we wall them off from our society or limit their opportunities to bring their views into our awareness, we not only treat them unjustly, we hold ourselves back and limit our own chances of success.

Can we find our passion, our unique contribution, the actions and feelings that *light us up*? Watch for situations where you feel alive, full of energy, bursting with

⁴³ In a similar light, we are not Democrat or Republican, American or French, engineer or cook; we are the next step in the growing and changing Universe that appears to be starting to see itself.

eagerness, when time flies by because you are so lost into the *flow*. These are the moments when you are most connected and living from your larger Self. At these times, do you find that you are more respectful of others, that you are secure in your own abilities and more willing to treat others as equals? That you are unafraid? How can you manage to focus more of your life into these moments, every day?

Can we leave no gift within us, ungifted to the world? Imagine the change we could birth in this world when we become available to a new paradigm; one that oozes from within us, that seeps from our heart to flood a decaying and dying worldview with new possibilities!

Astronauts describe The Moment in surprisingly similar ways. At some point during their first flight, they look out a window of their spacecraft and are stopped in their work, stunned by the awe and wonder of seeing our blue, brown and white planet hanging against the deep blackness of space. Even the majority, who travel off-planet after seeing the famous photo taken in 1968 as Apollo 8 came out from behind the Moon and have a good intellectual understanding that our oasis exists alone in the vast coldness of space, are overwhelmed with the visceral feeling that cannot be conveyed by a mere photograph. How would your perspective change once you had

undergone such an experience? How would your view be different if you could viscerally feel a child starve to death? Would your support for the government's policy of projected power fade if you were to watch your buddy's blood spill uncontrollably onto dry, foreign soil in the last minutes of his life? Would you have greater concern and compassion for an environment if you could feel the death of the last tiger in the wilds of Africa, rather than just hear the news of tiger extinction on the evening news? How many of our assumptions about the world would change if we allowed ourselves to become aware of what each event means to those who are closest to it?

What prevents us from indulging in that kind of empathy? What stops us from intervening when we see injustice happen to our family, a friend, or a neighbor? Fear is what allows injustice to fester, and to grow. We humans suffer from four basic types of fears: insecurity and helplessness, aloneness and disconnection, change, and unworthiness. These fears are only beliefs, stories we tell ourselves about the world and our place in it, and not the truth about who we are. By seeing through the fiction of the persona we believe ourselves to be, we can connect with our true nature. Once we are able to face our fears, once we willingly let them in and allow them to voice their concerns, they become a portal to reality. Please note that these four basic fears are not

just mental. Scientists tell us that fear is written into the cellular memory of the body, particularly into a small part of the brain called the amygdala. Our fears trigger a physical response; a release of chemicals that stimulate us into action, in a manner programmed hundreds of generations ago while our ancestors fought saber-toothed tigers for scraps of meat and bone. That is why simply knowing about our fears intellectually will not free us from their domination. Every time they are triggered, we slide into an established groove in the brain. So until we can see our fears clearly, we will not be able to practice with them directly.

This invitation to allow our fears to surface and to speak with us is in itself, scary. We don't want to feel discomfort and will do almost anything to avoid it. But whenever we allow our fear to control our actions, we make it a bigger part of our life. Our life then becomes smaller, more limited and more contracted. A core concept of spiritual life recognizes that practice is not about ensuring that we feel secure or comfortable or blissful. These fundamental feelings develop instead only when we are willing to sit with, and truly experience, our fears.

Our most basic fear is that of losing safety, and closely aligned with that is a fear of feeling helpless. Because safety is fundamental to our survival, this fear will instinctually be triggered at the first sign of

danger; our animal brain, or limbic system, is inherently wired that way. This particular fear will also be triggered when we experience pain or discomfort; we accept pain as notice that we are being damaged and we think discomfort is a precursor to illness that, left untreated, will kill us. But in most cases, there is no real danger to us; in fact, our fears of safety are usually imaginary — that the plane will crash, that we will be criticized, that we're doing it wrong. Often surfacing as the fear of losing control, the fear of being controlled, the fear of chaos, or even the fear of the unfamiliar, our fear of helplessness is also another aspect of the fear of safety. It is from trying to cope with this fear that we perpetrate injustice on others as we try desperately to assert our personal worthiness by dominating others. Putting our fear of helplessness aside, we demonstrate our power and judge ourselves to be more worthy than those around us. If we feel especially helpless, we may use anger to keep the fear at bay. Can you understand how rage may give us a feeling of power and control, but is usually just an evasion of a feeling that is much worse, one of powerlessness? Real freedom from the fear of helplessness or insecurity lies in recognizing the futility of demanding that life be within our control. Instead, we must learn the willingness to feel—to stay deeply present with—the experience of helplessness itself.

Another common fear is that of aloneness and disconnection, which we often feel as a fear of abandonment, loss, or death. Our fundamental feeling of being alone, which is a basic human experience born from our sense that we are separate and tiny in the vastness of the Universe, ultimately must be faced directly, or it will continue to dictate how we feel and live. It's interesting that one of life's most vital lessons is something we are never taught in school: how to be happy when we are alone with ourselves. If we wish to develop genuine intimacy in our relationships with others, it is crucial that we first face our own neediness and fear of aloneness. How can we expect to open and accessible to another person, to truly love or be intimate with someone if we're still relating to him or her from our fear-based needs? Once we feel fulfilled, our focus is no longer "about me", instead we find that our primary aspiration is to give and contribute.

We also fear that we are unworthy. This fear takes many forms, such as the fear that 'I don't count', the fear of being unworthy of love, or that we are stupid, and so on. Every time we judge our actions as faulty and tell ourselves, "I'm really dumb, that's why I did that" we perpetuate the sense that we are unworthy, and we tap into the energy of this fear. The fear that we'll never measure up to our own standards dictates much of our behavior; for example, it may impel us to continuously and forcefully prove ourselves.

Some of us have given up, and don't even try anymore. In fact, we are the most merciless in our constant self-judgments of unworthiness. Can we begin to question our deepest, darkest beliefs that feed our fears? Can we allow our fears to impart their energy, and then to decide consciously if we want that energy to be fueling our actions? Can we dissipate the fear by making it our friend?

As we change, our understanding of how the world works transforms. Our experiences give us our habits, our reactions, and our thoughts. These include what has come before; transcendence means inclusion of the prior attitudes and beliefs, even as new beliefs take prominence. We are never truly free of the past, as long as we act unconsciously. As we change, can we recognize that ego will always defend against a transition to higher states of awareness? Stagnation and complacency are just fine with the ego. It is this inertia we must guard against, if we are to grow.

J offer you a story, one that may or may not be *true* in the sense that it is verifiable. But notice as you read it, how it feels within your heart. Listen to how your heart sings along, as if it *is* true. Allow it to open new vistas to explore, new opportunities to see the world through fresh eyes.

In this particular society, an African indigenous people, a person's life begins even before conception. A mother, heeding a call to birth a new soul, will leave the hustle and bustle of the village and meditate upon this call. She listens to hear the song of the child who wishes to be born. Once she has learned the song, she returns to the village and teaches the child's song to the man who will be the child's father. As the couple makes love to create the child, they sing the song together. Once the mother is pregnant, she begins to teach the song to the midwives who will help birth the child. They will sing throughout the birth process, welcoming the child with his or her very own song. After the child is born, the mother teaches the child's song to everyone in the village. If the child is challenged, hurt or sad, anyone in the village can soothe them by singing the child's song. Eventually, as the person lies upon their deathbed, those attending them can sing the song for the final time, escorting the person out of the world the same way in which they entered it and completing the cycle of life.

Does this different way of viewing the world speak to your heart as it did mine? Can

you feel how it might be more difficult to exclude your neighbors because of one's skin color, or his education, or her poorer bank account, now that you know each person has their own, equally beautiful, song? Are you just a teeny bit jealous, missing hearing your very own song?

Work

I have always known that deep down I am a survivor. Even from my first days at school, when the other girls would laugh at the holes in my clothes, the faded colors of the hand-me-downs that I endured because Mother wasn't working and Dad was long gone, I was able to let the words wash over me like water over pebbles in a creek bed, knowing I would soon be dry again.

When I was twelve, my body began to fill out, and Mother remarried. Until that year, I had gotten along with her OK, we spent little time together as she was usually out trying to find enough money to keep food on the table, and a roof over my head. I don't know what she did for money; she never told me where she worked. But she seemed to resent that she had me to take care of, as if I was the only reason she had to work. After she remarried, she was able to stay home, but we still didn't find anything in common that let us talk together. She curled up on the couch under that afghan her grandmother had made eons ago, and thumbed through the satellite channels on TV all day long. If I tried to talk to her, I got monosyllable answers and soon enough, a growl that meant I had to leave the room, or else.

My step-dad didn't waste much time; before the year was out he began creeping

into my room late at night, after my mother was asleep. Even then, when the seed-thoughts of suicide began to pop up as he fondled me and thrust into me, hand pressed over my mouth to prevent me from crying out for help, I knew I was better than that and refused to think about suicide as a way out. I plotted revenge, in a thousand different scenarios, as I sat in boring classes at school, as I walked home from school, as I tried to get my mother to pay attention to what was happening to “your daughter, over here”. In short order, I began to find excuses to stay overnight at a friend’s house, though not often enough. They all accepted my story that my step-dad was beating me; a few times I even bruised my own arms and legs to make that lie believable. But when, at age 14, I became pregnant, that’s when the real problems began. Mother didn’t believe me when I swore that her husband was the only man who could possibly be the father of this child. She called me a slut and a whore and told me to get my “lyin’ ass out of sight until I could tell the truth”. At least she took me in to have an abortion, though she refused to come into the room and hold my hand while they cleaned out my insides. That’s why I packed a few clothes into a backpack as soon as we got home that evening, slipped some bills from her purse, and caught a bus to San Jose despite the pain in my belly and the grief in my heart.

It was hard, living on the streets, even though it was summer and the nights were mild. I didn't have to worry about being spotted outside of school since school was out, but I did have to worry about where and when to sleep. I couldn't imagine tucking in for the night under some overpass, vulnerable to whomever might stroll by. There were plenty of all-night coffee shops and such, but soon I was known at every one of them and found it increasingly difficult to hang out in them for any length of time. I began to wander up the Peninsula, in search of places that didn't know me, where I could nap for at least a few hours before the (kind) waitresses would gently suggest that I finish the coffee and move along, or the (unkind) managers would shake me awake and threaten to call the cops if I didn't stop smelling up the place.

On one of those nights, in Menlo Park when I had been snoozing for about an hour in a booth at the IHOP restaurant, I opened my eyes and saw Brad sitting on the other side of the table. This handsome stranger had just been watching me sleep. He smiled at me, and asked softly, "What's goin' on, pretty lady?" To this day, I don't know what made me open up to a complete stranger, but I proceeded to tell him about the abuse from my step-dad, about the long, lonely nights without sleep these past several months. I complained about how cold it was

getting at night, how hard to stay away from the law as school was back in session and I was obviously not attending, about how amazing it is that so much good food ends up in dumpsters behind markets and restaurants. He listened to it all, and at appropriate times, sympathized with me in a way that made me feel he honestly cared about my story. When he finally offered that I could clean up in his apartment and get a good night's sleep for once, I couldn't say 'no'.

The next few days were so unreal. He took me to buy some new clothes, he told me about how he had spent time on the streets several years ago, just like me, when he was 17. He began after just two days, to say, "I love you". No one had ever said that to me before. My heart soared, and of course, I murmured the same words back to him. We slept together in his bed that night, and it felt like our honeymoon. I felt warm and protected and safe, for the first time I could remember.

It didn't last long. The very next morning, Brad told me that he needed me to think about bringing in some money, to help with rent and bills, if I planned to stay. It seemed such a simple request, how could I refuse? But I quickly found out, as I trolled the streets looking for a job, that no one would hire a 14-year old. I felt so useless that evening, confessing to him that I had tried but had no idea where I might find work. I

said, with words I would come to regret, that I would do anything to stay with him, if he would just tell me what to do. That evening, he said he needed to go out to meet a friend who might offer him a job. I watched TV, and fell asleep on the couch. I woke up when he jerked me off the couch and dragged me down the hall. The door to the small room at the end stood open; it had two locks on it that I had barely noticed till now. He pulled me inside, and snapped one handcuff on my right wrist. The other cuff encircled a pipe that ran from floor to ceiling, disappearing through the tiles overhead. While I sat stunned, he pulled a ball gag from his back pocket and set it into place around my head. He then told me how things would be from now on; that I would be his slave and do whatever he told me, just 'what you said you want' he reminded me. I was not to yell or cry out, no matter what was happening. Just so that I understood how serious he was about this, and so I would know how bad things could get if I disobeyed, he proceeded to whip me, to beat me, to sodomize me and he even used a Taser on me, leaving me quivering and crying on the floor. He told me if I tried to escape, he would do things like this to me until I begged him to kill me, which he would with pleasure. When he finally relented, early in the morning, I could no more imagine escape than flying to the Moon.

The next two years are a blur that I try really hard to forget. A near-daily parade of men came through my room, using my body in any way they saw fit. Some left marks that faded away eventually and scars that didn't, while others, surprisingly, were gentle and even concerned about the bruises I always had somewhere on my body. But not one of these men ever asked about the conditions under which I was being kept, not one offered to help me escape. The floor was linoleum, and after each man had finished and left, Brad would throw a bucket of cold water on the floor, attach a long wire cable to a choker locked around my neck, and hand me a mop. I was expected to clean the floor, and to wipe off the plastic airbed mattress that was the only furniture in the room before changing the sheet that covered it. After I had finished, he would remove the choker and chain, once he had reattached my arm to the pole with the handcuffs.

The only time I left the room after that unholy first night was when I got sick with some kind of bug. My fever was so high that I began to hallucinate. I felt bugs crawling over my skin, and saw flames licking at the walls of the room. My throat felt raw, my voice was a mere rasping sound, my words could not be understood. Finally, I think out of fear that his golden goose was close to dying, Brad uncuffed me and dragged me to his car outside. He took me to a nearby

emergency room, threatening me the whole way with what he would do to me if I spoke even a word that alerted anyone about my situation. I knew if I ever returned to that room, I would die. And like I said before, I am a survivor.

The doctor, when he finally came into the examination room, was carrying a clipboard with some papers. He drew the curtains around the bed, screening the two of us from Brad's watchful eyes but not his listening ears. I took the clipboard from the doctor's hand, and as he raised an eyebrow and began to ask me about my ill health, I pulled the pen from his jacket pocket and began to write. I kept it short, but described my predicament and asked for help. He spoke a few words about needing to get a form to order some tests, and left the room. When he returned a few minutes later, armed security guards came with him. He took me by the arm and led me out of the room, while the guards grabbed Brad's arms and insisted that he remain behind. The last time I saw him, he was furious, screaming and thrashing about trying to escape, realizing that I was gone and never coming back. Or maybe he just knew that he would be spending a long time in prison, and that was making him frantic. I don't know, and I don't care.

What do we mean by wage inequality? In 2009, the top 20% of wage earners made 49% of the national income. The lower 20% made just 3.4%. This spread between rich and poor is the widest it has ever been. Since the 1970s, real, inflation-adjusted wages in America have *fallen* 30%. And in the 1970s, CEO pay was barely 40 times that of the lowest paid workers. In 2008 it exceeds 500 times. The only reason we haven't felt this decline in real wages is that today everyone in the household holds, or tries to hold a job outside the home. In the 1960s, less than one-third of women worked at paying jobs. Today, that number is 70%. Also, we have come to rely upon credit, both revolving charge cards and home mortgages, to finance our lifestyle. In 2009, nearly 15% of working citizens earn less than poverty-level income, defined as around \$20,000 for a family of four. Nearly 20% of our children live in poverty. Does this indicate that it is expensive to raise children? Does it mean that the poor receive less education? Studies have shown repeatedly, that when women are educated and have a sense of control over their lives, they have fewer children. If more of our children are born to our poor, we need to question if the poor get the same access to education as children of the rich. In our country, the answer is clear. The federal standard for worker's pay, called the minimum wage, was raised in 2009 to \$7.25

per hour. Full-time, 40-hour per week employment will earn a worker \$15,080 a year, just three-quarters of poverty level. Could you live on \$1,400 a month? How is it that someone who works hard, at a job that you yourself may not want to do because it is dirty, smelly, backbreaking work, deserves to make a less-than-living wage? We appreciate the people who come to our home when we call, and do the nasty work of clearing the jam from our sewer line, and yet we pay them six times what we pay the people who take care of our children in our local day care center. How much more than the President of the United States are you worth? How much more than the teacher who is instructing the next generation of leaders? We demonstrate our values with every dollar we spend. We send a clear message throughout the year, that we value property over people. There is no need and no justification that can support any person in a company earning more than 20 times that of the lowest paid worker. All work is valuable, especially work that we ourselves are loath to perform.

Following the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, that great 'sucking sound' of jobs flowing into the Maquiladora area along the border between the United States and Mexico was the beginning of what came to be known as 'outsourcing'. Wages paid to Mexican workers were low compared to those paid to

Americans, and the lack of pollution and worker safety standards meant that products could be manufactured at a much lower cost there than within our own borders. We soothed ourselves by accepting the story that the Mexican workers were being paid a living wage for their particular country, even though that was often not true. We turned a blind eye to the use of children in factories; it is easy to ignore these facts when there is no agency tasked with preventing such injustice. We happily purchase products that are historically cheap, without caring that the workers who made it labor 70 and 80 hours a week without overtime premiums, not by choice but because that is what the business owner demands of them. What is truly sad about this situation, is that many of these businesses lasted less than twenty years; China has become the low-wage leader in the manufacturing arena, and Mexico is witnessing its own great 'sucking sound' as its jobs flow across the Pacific.

We continue to hear complaints about raising the minimum wage, and resistance to the idea of mandating universal payment of a 'living' wage. Whenever the minimum wage comes up for review, we are told that raising it will lead to unemployment. Studies repeatedly show this claim is false, yet it continues to be made. It is apparent that raising the wages paid to workers increases the vitality of the economy by injecting money into the hands of people who will

consume goods and services. Adding another \$1,000 to the pay of someone making \$75,000 a year does not carry the same impact; it is often saved rather than spent. Adding \$1,000 to the account of someone making \$20,000 a year results in that money being spent. The idea of a living wage, meaning a wage that enables its recipient to have the funds necessary to survive in a particular area without relying upon charity or government support, seems logical. Why should we participate in an economy that allows some of its workers to be paid an insufficient wage? We complain about the need to spend tax revenues helping the poor, on the one hand, while on the other we allow businesses to pay as little as possible for workers without considering the lifestyle afforded by that meager pay. Nearly a third of the children in America have qualified for food stamps during their lifetime. This demonstrates how inadequate our pay scales are, and how unjust it is to allow corporations to profit from paying workers so little.

Many people assume that the poor are poor because they are lazy or lack the willpower or brains needed to complete a college education. In 2009, California experienced a 19% dropout rate from its high schools. If that is due to a lack of willpower or smarts, we have to ask why the rate is rising, getting worse each year? What has changed in our schools, other than their funding being cut

every year in order to balance budgets for more than a decade? Do the poor, by not paying enough in taxes, cause that funding deficit? While we certainly don't need everyone to graduate from college, it is clear there is an advantage to having a degree: the unemployment rate for college graduates is below 5% while the national average is above 9.5% and the rate for non-graduates is at 19%. And in terms of social justice, why is the unemployment rate for black Americans historically always double that of whites? Can we ask about the quality of schools in black communities, or about any residues of our racist history that might still be inherent in our culture that affect hiring decisions?

Raising children is not cheap, as anyone with kids can attest. Yet we have seen that as real wages fell these last 40 years, multiple incomes, home equity, and credit were the usual methods people used in order to stay financially solvent. Yet access to the credit needed to buy a home requires resources that people making low wages cannot amass. How many couples buy their first home with the assistance of money that comes from their parents as 'gifts' or their grandparents as inheritance? How many black families have had generations able to gather wealth together by owning property, to create even modest estates? And single parents find it very difficult to care for children and work multiple jobs, although many do it in order to survive. They also find it very difficult to

purchase a home in order to use its rising value to create equity that can be tapped for spending. Is it any wonder that so many children today live in poverty? Is it the fault of the parent that wages are so low? Economic outcomes are thought to be fair, especially in a 'free market': market forces dole out rewards to those who merit them, right? Maybe not. Power, whether it's based on political clout, wealth, class, gender or race is the key determinant of who gets what. It is hard to move up the ladder when the next rung keeps moving farther away. This is the root cause of economic injustice: that justice depends on power, not responsibility or hard work.

Because so much of the manufacturing of goods has been sent overseas, we have no way of knowing the conditions under which particular items are made. The United Nations reports that there are more than 30 million people who could properly be called slaves today:

- people who are working in situations where they are forbidden from changing jobs, or
- where they are not paid at all, or
- where they are working off debts incurred, usually for costs incurred during transportation into another country (human trafficking) but sometimes even for debts incurred by

the parents or grandparents before they were born, or

- while working off debts to the company store for food and/or the company as landlord of the shack in which they sleep, or
- as children sold into slavery by parents who were told the children would benefit from expanded educational opportunities, or
- people forced to provide free labor on government projects by dictators who do not fear they will ever be held to account for the enslavement of their own citizens

Americans would not support the enslavement of others, but because we can't inspect the manufacturing plants or the mines where resources are extracted to make products, we unwittingly support a system that is determined to make as much money as possible while keeping prices low. We need to question every instance where a price seems too good to be true: who actually got paid for making this? How much were they paid, and do they work in a safe environment? Continuing to purchase goods without demanding answers to these questions makes us complicit in the injustice this system is perpetrating on the poor around the world.

Part of our maturity as a culture and as a species, involves growing out of the tendency, the knee-jerk reaction, to prohibit

any change that might cause our own traditional, inherited lifestyle to disappear. At some point, we reach a feeling of, “is this all there is?” We need to be able to see the best of what this viewpoint offers, and then transcend that perspective and grow into a new awareness, a new truth. This new perspective will be in some cases, radically different than what came before. But there are alternate ways of seeing, and there are lifestyles that are more complete, in physical, mental, emotional and spiritual terms, than the one you enjoy today. Part of our growth is to begin to call out these injustices when we see them, and to refuse to participate in perpetuating them. This may mean forgoing that purchase of the new electronic gadget made with slave-produced resources, or refusing to buy food products made from subsidized corn, or leaving a tip for the convenience store clerk making minimum wage. What ideas do you have, for ending these cycles of oppression?

Consumer

The thing that makes me saddest is feeling that I played by all the rules. I did what I was supposed to, in order to have the American Dream come true. Today, standing on the sidewalk outside the small apartment that I have luckily rented, my heart cries out for what should have been, for the future I thought I was buying for myself and my now ex-wife not 5 years ago. Today, remembering the shame and embarrassment of having a Sheriff's Deputy pound on the door of what used to be "our" house at o'dark-thirty in the morning as he kicked me out of my dream, I am crushed; my will to work off my debts drifting away on the cool morning breeze as surely as my ability to pay.

I went to a good, though not great, college. University of California at Berkeley was renowned as being the hotbed of hippie protest in the 1960s and 1970s, but when I attended in the late 1980s it rarely made headlines. My degree in Business Administration was just the ticket for success in our capitalist economy, or so I thought. But on the day I graduated, I owed just over \$72,000 on my student loans and, thanks to two solicitations that I had accepted during my sophomore year, credit card debt totaling just over \$18,000. Starting post-university life with a debt of

\$90K had not been part of the original plan, but there I was. I made the minimum payments on my two credit cards, not understanding until much later that this “saving money now” effectively meant I was only paying the interest and would be paying off this debt for more than a decade.

I got a job that promised promotions through the ranks of middle management, culminating in a department manager position that would make all of this early sacrifice worthwhile financially. I expected to be making over \$100,000 a year within seven or eight years. My college sweetheart, also a business major, and I married three weeks after graduation. We rented a small apartment close to a BART station, and used the transit system for our commute to San Francisco to hunt for work. Landing jobs within a few weeks, Carrie with a title company and me with Bank of America (before it was sold), our plan was proceeding apace. We furnished our small apartment, while trying to save money to buy our dream home. Then that apartment got to be too small for all our stuff, and since our savings plan wasn't going as well as our interior decorating, we moved to a bigger apartment closer to work in San Francisco. This seemed like a great idea; it allowed us to become more familiar with The City so that when we could finally afford to buy, we would know which neighborhood we wanted to settle into.

Carrie got a nice SUV, hoping to soon have little ones that would benefit from the larger, safer transportation, and I got an Acura NSX, a sports car that reflected my high-energy, playful personality. Adding the two car payments and the parking fees in downtown lots near our jobs to our monthly budget, over \$1,500/month, increasingly cramped our ability to save for our home purchase. But life in San Francisco was every bit as exciting as we could want. The restaurants, the views, the clubs at night, every facet of our new neighborhood brought us joy and happiness.

Our salaries continued to grow, and I had finally just touched the six-figure salary I had been striving for when the bank was sold to NationsBank. As part of the restructuring, and the movement of company headquarters to the East Coast, I was let go. Just in time, as my unemployment neared its end in early 1999, I landed a job with a small start-up company that was bringing one of those Internet businesses to market during the infamous bubble. I worked for peanuts and stock options and Carrie and I scraped by on her salary, since mine didn't even cover our transportation bills. The promise that kept me going on such meager earnings was that the initial public offering (IPO) would make up in or all my work rather quickly, once I could exercise and sell my

stocks. But the popping bubble came just weeks before my lock-out expired; I held my stocks until the day I could sell, and by that time they were deeply under water. The company itself folded up shop within months, and once again, I was left to start over.

Carrie took a new job with a local mortgage broker. She went onto a commission pay plan, with some trepidation since I was again out of work. We tapped out our savings that had been designated for our home purchase just to get by. I even gutted my 401(k) plan left over from the bank. We managed to make all our minimum payments, keeping our credit good, but we knew that in order to buy our home we would have to get some of our accounts paid and closed. We had nearly a dozen credit accounts of various types; solicitations for cards with zero interest for a year or more would arrive in the mail and we would sign up. Quickly, though, we would begin to use them for new purchases, as other cards maxed out. After several months, Carrie started to see her commissions on her take-home pay and we got a handle on our ocean of debt. Try as I might, though, I was having trouble finding another job. My unemployment ran out, and we once again reverted to eating in rather than out. I like cooking, sort of, but don't know many recipes. When Carrie complained about the same three meals

week after week, I started going online and finding new meals to cook for her. This was hard on the budget though; each new recipe seemed to require ingredients that we didn't have on our shelves already, and I had to buy lots of condiments and spices to broaden our taste experiences. Eventually, I got to be a pretty good cook, if you don't mind me saying so.

I took a course on becoming a real estate appraiser, and once that had finished started to freelance for mortgage brokers who were running clients through the re-finance process. They recommended me to the banks they were using for the financing, and soon I was driving all around the Bay and racking up lots of commissions. It helped, too, to be getting a good feel for the market, particularly in the two neighborhoods that we had our eyes on for our own home purchase in San Francisco. Carrie had mentioned our desire to buy at her job, and in early 2005 she came home one evening with a loan application packet. We sat around the table in our kitchen and gathered up the details of our previous employment and all our credit balances, and she took it in to work the next day. We were approved for a loan that afternoon, and spent the next two months in a whirlwind of activity hunting for the perfect house. We finally found one that, while it needed some repair, was both within our budget and close to Carrie's workplace. It

would take some money to decorate it to Carrie's taste (I could care less about interior decorating, as long as the big-screen TV I planned for the den was in working order), but we knew we would live here the rest of our lives, so what did that matter? Remodeling would give us the chance to move a few walls around, expanding the living room, too. Even the \$1.5 million price didn't faze us. A short bidding war added \$110,000, but no matter. We were ecstatic when our bid was accepted.

We got one of the new loans, an adjustable rate that was the lowest interest charged in some thirty years. After three years it would adjust upwards, but by then we could re-finance and roll it over into a fixed rate loan going forward. In order to pass through the underwriting process, we paid off two of our credit cards from our down-payment savings.

We hung on for dear life that first year in our new home. We had no money for remodeling; we wore sweaters as much as possible instead of turning up the heat, and continued to eat in. Carrie traded in her SUV for an even larger one, a Navigator, and I traded the NSX for a Carrera. Now our transportation costs neared \$3,000/month.

Our troubles began in early 2007. Carrie was getting increasingly impatient with me, as I stubbornly refused to have children

until I was making enough money that she could stay home with the kids the first few years. Carrie would come home from work and tell me stories about clients she was helping to get loans, clients making \$37,000 a year and taking on \$650,000 mortgages. “This is crazy”, she would say, rolling her eyes up and shaking her head. We saw the value of our own home approach \$2 million. We decided to tap into that increased equity by refinancing and paying off some of our credit cards, and we even managed to lower our interest rate by half a point in the process.

Then Carrie finally got her wish: she was pregnant. I spent several days in a panic, not knowing how we could possibly pay all our bills on my salary alone. She wasn't pleased when I showed her the budget projection that demonstrated the most time she could take off work was 4 weeks, if we were to make our payments on time. And since bad news comes in pairs, the newspapers disclosed that people were beginning to default on their mortgages. Apparently, there were some people getting loans who weren't very credit-worthy. Carrie could have told you that. But as banks began to realize the extent of the problem, they began to tighten their lending criteria and as there were fewer buyers available, prices began to fall. You know the rest of that portion of my story, it wasn't long before our home was worth less than

we had paid for it in 2005; our loan was deeply underwater.

We would have been fine; we planned to live in this house for a long time anyway. No matter if we are underwater or not. But with the decrease in purchases, my commission-based salary also went down. Towards the end of the year, as Carrie's belly looked ready to burst, we faced the reality of having to skip a few credit card payments. If she stopped working for any amount of time, we would miss enough that a few would go into collection. I traded in my Porsche for a cheaper Toyota, and we began to argue about whether we should trade in the Navigator for something smaller too. Carrie insisted that our baby be protected by the large vehicle, but I felt she should sell it and walk to work since her job was only 9 blocks away. We were astounded when we began to search for day care so that Carrie could quickly return to work after giving birth; it would take nearly half her check just for that.

I began to have trouble sleeping. Stress and worry ate at my mind every moment. We were getting phone calls about our late payments. She was tired of being pregnant on top of it all, and let me know she was unhappy every chance she got. We fought constantly. Her check got smaller; she was doing a lot less loan closings than before. My check got smaller; there was much less

appraisal work. What were we supposed to do?

By the beginning of 2008, our life, my life, was in shambles. True, we had a new baby girl we named Angel, who was the most beautiful baby you have ever seen. Even complete strangers said so. But we were behind on several credit accounts, in collection on others, and I admit the thought of letting the bank repossess the Navigator crossed my mind more than once. But I would never be ready for that battle.

I suppose I should have seen it coming, but I was surprised when I came home from one of my now-infrequent appraisals in March to find a note from Carrie. She was going back to her parent's home, and taking Angel. She said in the note she was tired of being broke, of not knowing how we would continue to pay our bills, of the pressure to work and ignore her baby while Angel bonded with her caregivers instead of Mom. I suppose she's right; I mean, Mom should be with baby, right? I suppose we could have done things differently, but we thought we were doing OK. I tried to get accounts paid off while skipping the mortgage during foreclosure, but even with that help, not much got taken care of.

So tell me. What did I do wrong? And where do I go from here? How can I pick up the pieces of my shattered life and regain any measure of financial security? How do I ever think of buying a home again? How

will I ever get these debts paid off? And most of all, tell me why I should care.

Our future is being compromised, not by the greed of corporate executives, but by popular demand. Those of us with access to investment capital, demand that we receive a ‘good’ return on any investment we make. If we invest in corporate stocks, we demand that the company show a profit (hopefully an ever-increasing profit). We drive the executives to make decisions that will be reflected in the next quarterly report, rather than in the long-term sustainability of the company or of nature. We would complain loudly if the CEO announced a plan to raise the wages of workers to a level that would allow one partner in the family to stay home to raise the children properly, because that policy could not avoid cutting into profits. We demand cheap goods anytime we shop. We compare prices relentlessly, but seem to buy solely on the basis of price without thought to the intangibles behind the low cost. To paraphrase Paul Hawkin, writing in *“The Ecology of Commerce”*, an organic farmer who builds up soil quality by not using pesticides or herbicides, who does not pollute the groundwater, who uses less energy to produce his crop by limiting the use of heavy machinery, who does not exploit migrant labor, who does not leave containers of organophosphate pesticides to rust behind

his barn or in unmarked dumpsites, and who maintains and furthers genetic diversity in his seed stock, cannot beat the price charged by a corporate-owned factory farm that does all of these things. Such a farmer has retained what we, as a society, have lost: a cultural, inclusive relationship to resources that sees a sustainable-yield harvest as the proper way to create a stable and healthy way of life.

We shop for everything. We shop for our religion, our neighborhood, our education, our job, and even for our mate. And if we are at all unhappy with our current possessions, we dispose of them and shop some more. We undervalue what we have, and we ignore what truly makes us happy: secure, long-term relationships with those we cherish and love. We don't rue not having the latest electronics when we are moments away from death, we regret not having spent more time with our loved ones. Why can't we begin to craft a lifestyle that focuses on what's truly important, one that doesn't depend on a throwaway materialism that keeps us distracted? We consider it our inalienable right to shop for the best price. Even if we wanted to do the right thing, why should we ignore our chance to buy a cheap airline seat, paying more instead in order to help the airline pay a living wage, when the next guy will buy the cheap seat and thereby gain an economic advantage on us? Can we stop

comparing ourselves to everyone else, and instead, do what is right? Can we insist that corporations take care of their workers as if they are vital to the company's future success?

Democracy is untidy, indirect. Capitalism is direct. We vote with our money, telling the world what we value with every cent we spend. In another angle, business profits buy government. Especially now, as the corporations have been unleashed and are allowed to spend freely without disclosure to influence elections, but even before when lobbyists outnumbered elected officials dozens or hundreds to one. In the 1800s our social contract was deeply embedded within our community. Within that perspective, we are citizens. However, today, in the early 2000s, we are consumers, free to buy whatever we want, but individually, separately, with no obligation to help others. This is demonstrated by the ever-decreasing amount of charity contributions as a percentage of GDP. As the tax rules changed to require documentation in order to claim a tax benefit from charitable contributions, the amounts claimed fell dramatically.

Can we also begin to question *how* we give aid to others? The international NGO⁴⁴ establishment, meaning all of the helping organizations that make the news, and

⁴⁴ NGO: Non-Governmental Organization, often called a non-profit in America

hundreds more besides, has acquired a reputation for being predatory and corrupt. Often, staff from the NGOs cluster together, working, relaxing, and even sleeping in compounds that prevent them from intermingling with, and truly understanding, the plight facing those they have come in-country to help. They may speed up to a location, jump out and bark a few orders, then hop back into their shiny new SUV and speed away, leaving the local population bewildered, jealous and resentful. Usually, when foreign aid is given and trumpeted in the news, it comes with strings attached. The money is only to be used to pay American companies, not local businesses, to do whatever work is required, for example. Or it only pays for food that is purchased in America and shipped to the needy country, rather than flowing to local farmers and allowing the money to re-circulate and help build the local economy. Bribes are a frequent reason funds evaporate without helping the intended recipients, and in countries without a firmly established rule of law, any aid money that makes it over the border and into the country is sucked up by the ruling party and again, never makes it to the streets where it is needed most. Even in situations where the NGO is cognizant of the typical problems engendered during the aid process, there is inherent tension in their relationship with the local population. Writing in a blog posting about her

experience in Haiti in 2010 with an international relief organization⁴⁵, Michele Chen says, “The young internationals [volunteers with the NGO] try to knit together empathy and solidarity as they labor alongside their local peers, yet the different levels of privilege peel open like the cascading sheaths of cement layered around us... We are engaged in a complex dance with our Haitian counterparts. We work for free because we can. They work for free because they have no choice. Most of us come from places that will never know anything like the poverty Haitians experience every day. Most of the Haitians know that they are the objects of bittersweet admiration. While their will to survive puts an American like me to shame, we don't know whether to feel sympathy for the forsaken but defiant nation, or frustration at the folks trying to rescue it.” [A local volunteer] says, “If there's any kind of confusion between us, we try to resolve our problems the best way that we can because we know that we need each other. And what's hard about it is that the local volunteers need the international volunteers more than the international volunteers need the local volunteers.” Michele disagreed, feeling that having the help of local people for translating, for directing, and for explaining the local cultural norms and expectations was invaluable. In the end, if we

⁴⁵ Formerly Hands On Disaster Response, now named All Hands Volunteers, at www.hands.org

are unable to teach and to hand off projects to the local population, we have failed. We should not create dependence in the local people on aid from abroad just to feel good about ourselves. Can we approach these situations with a deep respect for the people we hope to serve? Can we find ways to ease our post-colonial guilt or shame over past injustices, or to express our compassion for others who have come into some really bad luck, that leave people more empowered and capable, not dependent and weak? How would this change in mindset reflect back, teach and guide us in our economic relationships within our own neighborhood?

“The Revolution will be led by a 12-year-old girl”: does that get your attention? Indeed, according to the website (and movement) girleffect.com, this is our future. Presenting another approach to foreign aid, the plan recognizes 10 key facts about our world today:

1. *Let's see some ID* Without a birth certificate or ID, a girl in the developing world doesn't know and can't prove her age, protect herself from child marriage, open a bank account, vote, or eventually get a job. That makes it hard to save the world.
2. *Illiteracy does not look good on a resume* Today 70% of the world's out-of-school children are girls. Girls

deserve better. They deserve quality education and the safe environments and support that allow them to get to school on time and stay there through adolescence.

3. *... and pregnancy doesn't look good on a little girl* Child marriages are the norm in many cultures where girls' bodies aren't considered their own property. Pregnancy is the leading cause of death globally for girls 15-18 years old. Girls have a right to be able to protect their health and their bodies⁴⁶.
4. *The face of HIV is increasingly young and female* When girls are educated about HIV, they stand a better chance of protecting themselves. But education is not enough. Girls need to be empowered and supported to make their own choices.
5. *A nice place to work would be nice* If girls have the skills for safe and decent work, if they understand their rights, if they are financially literate and considered for nontraditional jobs at an appropriate age, if they get their fair share of training and internships,

⁴⁶ Note: this means we have to be willing to state something as a fact, as an undeniable truth, regardless of any culture or historical tradition. In our post-modern societies, stating an absolute such as this is taboo. Let's move beyond that politically correct stance and start to call out power when it is acting in a manner that is just plain wrong.

they will be armed and ready for economic independence.

6. *The check is in the mail, but it's going to your brother* Only HALF A CENT of every aid dollar spent in the developing world is earmarked for girls. And yet when a girl has resources, she will reinvest them in her community at a much higher rate than a boy would. If the goal is health, wealth and stability for all, a girl is the best investment.
7. *Adolescent girls aren't just "future women"* They're girls. They deserve their own category. They need to be a distinct group when we talk about aid, education, sports, civic participation, health and economics. Yes, they are future mothers. But they actually live in the present.
8. *Laws were made to be enforced* Girls need advocates to write, speak up, lobby, and work to enforce good laws and change discriminatory policies.
9. *She should be a statistic* We won't know how to help girls until we know what's going on with them. Hey, all you governments and NGOs and social scientists: You're accountable! We need an annual girl report card for every country so we can keep track of which girls are thriving and which girls are not.

10. *Everyone gets on board or we're all overboard* Boys, girls, moms, dads. If we don't all rally to support girls, nothing is going to change. Not for them, and not for us. Change starts with you. So get going.

Although that was written about and directed towards helping the more than 600 million girls growing up in the developing world, the key takeaways here apply to American girls (and boys!) and society too:

- Illiteracy, and especially financial illiteracy, does not serve anyone well. Even in America, we graduate students who have no financial education, and those that complete college often do so with a huge mountain of debt as their graduation gift (and their first lesson in compound interest).
- Teen pregnancy will not be cured through teaching abstinence. Good, early, and transparent sex education and access to effective birth control methods are the only ways to end this scourge on our nation's girls.
- Complete sex education must include information about safe sex, and condoms should be

free for the asking, no matter one's age.

- Can we begin to spend some of our education dollars on good vocational training? We don't need everyone to have a college degree, but today vocational schools are considered the 'when-all-else-fails' option, not a bona fide career path.
- Can we begin to spend our aid and some of our military dollars, in Appalachia as well as in Afghanistan, on programs that educate everyone and build a sound economic foundation for the local area?
- We are all human beings, of one family: mankind. Can we act like we are related to everyone else, please?
- Corruption, both here and abroad, must be rooted out. By the way, America is not listed among the 10 nations with the least amount of corruption.
- Results tend to mirror the statistics that we use to measure them. Meaning, if we want to see more consumption, let's use GDP. If we want more education, let's track and announce graduation rates. If

we want to become happier people, let's track the elements that go into that recipe: life expectancy, maintenance of long-term relationships, family size, and time off from work, for example.

Globalization has turned out to be just another method for manufacturing goods that are cheap and mediocre, while fostering a worldwide monoculture and destroying resiliency. We can turn a blind eye to the pollution, worker safety and low wage issues, while continuing to consume material goods even though our own wages are likewise falling. Is it really possible, as Annie Leonard says in her video "*The Story of Stuff*"⁴⁷ that a radio can be sold for \$4.99? Great deals do not come cheap. That radio is made from plastic that comes from petroleum pumped out of one continent, electronic parts made on another, assembled on a third and sold on a fourth. How can all that work and transportation and sales expense be recouped in such a low price? The reality is, it can't. Society pays the costs of workers without health care or disability insurance or a living wage, and the costs of cleaning up (or ignoring) the pollution caused by plastic manufacturing, the use of toxic chemicals while making the electronics, and air and water pollution during transportation.

⁴⁷ www.storyofstuff.com

Cultures around the world are becoming more Americanized every day. Even before a blockbuster movie is released in the U.S., it is possible to watch it in theaters, already overdubbed in the local language, around the globe. Knock-offs of patented products like the iPhone are sold in markets everywhere. Skin whitening creams advertise extensively in magazines and on TV in Asian countries, hinting at the belief that we must all be white to be successful. Television dramas mimic the reality shows of America today, and the soap operas from years ago. America's most powerful export is our mindset, our culture.

Corporations need to show a profit, hopefully and ever-greater one, and this pressure leads them to unlawful, immoral behavior. Again, Paul Hawkin, writing in 1993:

“A person is liable for what he does; he is also responsible for knowing right from wrong. Corporate crime, on the other hand, is perceived and handled differently. It is rarely even referred to as crime. No one is held responsible for the increased incidence of cancer following Three Mile Island, even though unsafe conditions and practices were known and sanctioned by Philadelphia Electric. The American executives at Shell Oil, in charge of manufacturing DBCP were not liable for the 1,000 Costa Rican employees of Standard

Brands who became sterile after working with this chemical, nor is Standard Brands 'liable' for shipping the remaining 45,000 gallons of the DBCP inventory to Honduras after the pesticide was banned in Costa Rica. When McDonnell Douglas deceives government regulators about the safety of an aircraft and people die, what shall we call it? When Proctor and Gamble dumps chemicals in a Florida waterway that kill wildlife and sends poisons up the food chain to be eaten by people, how shall we name it? When Dow Corning does not inform breast implant recipients of evidence it held back for 18 years detailing potentially damaging effects of the materials involved, has a crime been committed?"

The list that we could generate today would include the Deepwater Horizon and the complete lack of enforcement, and consequent ignoring, of the Clean Water Act of 1990. Capitalism, as its name implies, has come to value business and profit over human beings. We cannot expect to get a fair shake while this state of affairs continues. Can we take back our place as the rightful owners of business, and to demand that business meet our needs, and the needs of Nature, rather than the needs of the God of Profit? Can we see the injustice when the

Black Mesa Indian reservation is strip mined for coal to power an electrical generating plant, serving the needs of Los Angeles and Las Vegas, even as the people living on the reservation have no electrical power of their own?

If everyone were to be buried with their prize possessions, what would future archaeologists think of our society? What would you be buried with? What does that say about you? Can we begin to understand that consuming less helps bring us into equality with the rest of the people on the planet? The Earth cannot support 7 billion people living like Americans. It is patently unjust for us to claim ours, as a birthright arising from the happy chance that we were born at this time in this country, and to deny others the same opportunity for an easy life. How would your consumption pattern be different if you couldn't throw anything away? Trash today gets carted away and piled in someone else's back yard, so it is virtually invisible. Can you begin a habit of giving something away before you buy something new? Can you begin to shop for goods that are repairable, upgradeable, or recyclable instead of disposable? Can you choose the product with less packaging, when given the chance? Can you carry your own bag and cup as a matter of course, so that a disposable one is not needed? Can we begin to respect the Earth, and not just pile

our trash higher and higher, blocking
someone else's once-pristine view?

Food

Here's Barb Kowalcyk, speaking in 2008 in the movie "Food, Inc":

"I'm a registered Republican. I've always been fairly conservative. I never thought I would be doing this [approaching the government to get laws passed to protect citizens from unsafe food] and I certainly never thought I would be working so closely with my mom. My mom and I, our relationship has taken on a whole new dimension."

Here's U.S. Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO): "After the first big push to establish food standards, people just got complacent. We reduced funding for the FDA. We've relied increasingly on self-policing for all of these industries. And now we just have, really, lost our system."

Barb Kowalcyk: "You're really one of the champions on the hill for food safety and it's a very important cause. It's very personal to me and my family. Our food safety advocacy work started six years ago when my two-and-a-half-year-old son Kevin was stricken with E. coli O157:h and went from being a perfectly healthy beautiful little boy--and I have a small picture with me today that was taken two weeks before he got sick. He went from that to being dead in 12 days. In July 2001, our family took a

vacation. Had we known what was in store for us, we would have never gone home.

"We ended up eating three hamburgers before he got sick. We started to see blood in Kevin's diarrhea, so we took him to the emergency room.

And they said, "We've gotten the culture back from Kevin's stool, and he has hemorrhagic E. coli." They came in and informed us that Kevin's kidneys were starting to fail. Kevin received his first dialysis treatment. He was not allowed to really drink water. We had these little sponges and we were allowed to dip that into a cup of water and then give him that. He bit the head off of one of them. You've never seen someone beg. He begged for water. It was all he could talk about. They wouldn't let anybody bring any beverage into the room because--I mean, it was all he would talk about, was... water.

"I don't know if he knew what was happening to him...and I hope--I don't know. To watch this beautiful child go from being perfectly healthy to dead in 12 days--it was just unbelievable that this could happen from eating food. What was kind of adding more insult to injury--it took us almost two years and hiring a private attorney to actually find out that we matched a meat recall. On August 1st, my son was already in the hospital. They did an E. coli test at the plant that was positive.

They didn't end up recalling that meat until August 27th, 16 days after he died.

You never get over the death of your child.

You find a new normal.

“We put faith in our government to protect us, and we're not being protected at a most basic level. In 1998, the USDA implemented microbial testing for salmonella and E. coli O157:h7. The idea was that if a plant repeatedly failed these tests, that the USDA would shut the plant down because they obviously had an ongoing contamination problem. The meat and poultry associations immediately took the USDA to court. The courts basically said the USDA didn't have the authority to shut down the plants. What it meant was that you could have a pound of meat or poultry products that is a petri dish of salmonella and the USDA really can't do anything about it. A new law was introduced in direct response and this law became known as Kevin's Law. It seems like such a clear-cut, common sense type thing. We've been working for six years and it still hasn't passed. I sense that there may be an opportunity--an enhanced opportunity--to get this signed into law this time. [As of July 2011, Kevin's Law has yet to come up for a vote.] I think that from the standpoint of the consumer, a lot of people would support the idea of paying a little more if they could be guaranteed a higher standard of safety. But I also know that there are other players in the food production chain... that tend to

worry about that, because it's gonna be seen as an add-on to their costs. Sometimes it does feel like industry was more protected than my son. That's what motivated me to become an advocate. In the past year alone (2007), there have been a multitude of food-borne illness outbreaks, which have resulted in significant losses. Clearly our current approach to food oversight and protection is not meeting the needs of American families.

"It's really hard for me to tell Kevin's story. But the only way I'm going to be able to prevent it from happening to other people is to go out there and speak about it. It will be seven years since my son died. All I wanted the company to do was say "We're sorry. We produced this defective product that killed your child, and this is what we're going to do to make sure it doesn't happen again." That's all we wanted, and they couldn't give us that.

"I can't change the fact that Kevin's dead. When you tell somebody you've lost a child, I really don't like that look of pity that comes into their eyes; that they feel sorry for me. I can have a pity party all by myself very well, thank you. I don't need it from other people. What I need them to do is listen and help me effect a change."

Yes, food, is a social justice issue. Our food today is making us sick. Whether you

complain about our use of cheap oil to purchase tomatoes from halfway around the world in the dead of winter, even if they were picked green and gassed in transit and only vaguely remind you of the tasty, “heirloom” tomatoes you savored as a youngster, or you cite the inclusion of high fructose corn syrup in 90% of the products in your neighborhood supermarket, or you note the inability of so many people to buy anything other than sugar-based foods that are engendering the worst epidemic of diabetes in our history; each of these issues have a greater impact, and cause greater harm, to the poor than they do to the rich. As multinational corporations increasingly push rural farmers off their land in order to export food to other countries and sap profits out of the local community into overseas bank accounts, we see time and time again famines that emerge in the midst of plenty: countries invariably export food while their own citizens starve. Is this because the rich are entitled to become richer, at the expense of the poor? Is it the result of unequal access to land and the resources needed to raise a crop? Is it because “this is just the way things are”, and we lack the vision to see a new and more just way of doing business? Fair access to loans and land feeds everyone. We have enough land and resources to feed all 6.7 billion people on the earth today; it’s just our unfair distribution of those resources that leads to poverty and famine.

In some cases, our own food purchases in America affect the poor in other countries. America today heavily subsidizes food production, ostensibly to ensure that farmers will continue to plant. This often results in cheap food that can be exported into developing countries, meaning that farmers outside the U.S. can no longer compete in the marketplace and they go out of business. Developing nations thus become dependent upon imported food.

In most cases, whether you are comparing the 75-cent soda to the \$3/dozen of eggs, or the 99-cent double cheeseburger from McDonald's to the \$1.49 head of broccoli, the subsidized product wins your vote. And if you are poor, there is little chance that your choice will be based on the merits of the food or the damage that sugar does to the health of your children; you *have to* choose the cheaper product. When you don't have the ability to buy your food in bulk, you are dependent upon small, one-serving size meals. This increases the dependence of poor people on the unhealthy fast-food-type diets, consisting entirely of sugar and corn, which are implicated in so many of our 21st century health problems.

We demand cheap food, and in response our government:

- allows corn and wheat to be made into feed for all the common meat

- animals (we are even feeding corn to tilapia and salmon these days),
- funds research and development that has made corn and its byproducts an integral part of many common household goods, not just food,
 - encourages farmers to convert corn to biofuels so we can burn it in car engines,
 - creates budgets that fail to appropriate the funds to staff regulatory agencies adequately. Thus there is little or no enforcement of the regulations and laws pertaining to food safety and to worker safety, on the farms, in the fields, and in packing and processing plants

We humans are hardwired to search for and store up sugar and salt when we can find these necessary, and historically uncommon, foods. It is only in the last few hundred years that agriculture has enabled us to have ready access to them, and we are witnessing the result of too much consumption of sugar and salt: obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. Our food system has allowed corporations to make decisions about the food we eat based on a paradigm that celebrates faster, bigger and cheaper as the path to the greatest profits, without concern for the health of the consumers. It's not that we need more government regulation to ensure that the food we eat is safe, it's that we need the laws

we already have to be enforced. The FDA, USDA and EPA are hopelessly under-funded and cannot begin to regulate industry effectively. In the last few decades, many lobbyists and former food industry executives have managed to take positions of influence and decision-making high within these agencies, including the Supreme Court⁴⁸, and they have been able to bend the government culture of regulation away from confrontations with the largest corporations. We are witnessing the same disdain, disrespect and controlling behavior towards our own health, towards workers, and towards our values that the food industry applies towards the animals it raises for our meals. It is nearly impossible to catch even a glimpse of the detailed life story of the chickens, cows and pigs that we eat today. The conditions they are raised in, and the manner in which they are slaughtered and processed, is as guarded as the Colonel's

⁴⁸ In *Monsanto v. Geertson Seed Farms*, No. 09-475 (2010), the U.S. Supreme Court, in a case which will have an enormous effect on the future of the American food industry, decided in favor of Monsanto enforcing a ban on farmers saving seeds for next year's crop. This was Monsanto's third appeal of the case; now a deregulated Monsanto finds itself in position to corner the markets of numerous U.S. crops, and to litigate conventional farmers into oblivion. From the years 1976 - 1979, Justice Clarence Thomas worked as an attorney for Monsanto. Thomas apparently did not see this as a conflict of interest and did not recuse himself. Fox, meet henhouse.

Secret Recipe or the formula of McDonald's Secret Sauce.

Jmmigrants, many in the U.S. illegally, are routinely rounded up and deported from the processing plants of multi-national food conglomerates, yet the companies are never indicted or even fined for their role in attracting and hiring these people. How long will we ignore that our food remains cheap because these companies take advantage of illegal labor pools in order to limit the workers' ability to complain or force compliance with labor and safety laws? When will we stop these companies from raking in billions of dollars in profit from the labor of people who lack health care and disability coverage, and who struggle to survive on minimal wages? Would you be willing to step into their shoes, working as a human-like robot, on the beef or chicken processing line? Let's begin to value their work with the appreciation they are due, at least as long as we insist on having meat at every meal.

From the book "*Food, Inc*" edited by Karl Weber:

"For us to wait for legislation or technology to solve the problem of how we're living our lives suggests we're not really serious about changing – something our politicians cannot fail to notice. They will not move until we do. Indeed, to look to

leaders and experts, to laws and money and grand schemes, to save us from our predicament represents precisely the sort of thinking – passive, delegated, dependent for solutions on specialists – that helped get us into this mess in the first place. It’s hard to believe that the same sort of thinking could now get us out of it.”

And where does change begin? One good place to start is in our schools. We not only have the chance to ensure that our children eat healthy meals, we can also prevent them from having access to snack foods and sodas on school grounds and we can teach them *why* they are eating this way, in other words, we can teach them about nutrition and how it contributes to healthy lifestyles.

It can be the beginning of a new medical paradigm in our country, one that focuses on prevention rather than cure. We can adopt the view that doctors are only doing their job when they prevent us from falling ill. Today we reward them for healing us. Can we start to reward them when they protect us? What if we paid them only for months we are well, and they have to work for free to cure us when we are sick? Would they enlist the help of government agencies already tasked with ending pollution and with keeping our food safe if their pay depended on our health?

They might even push to get labels on our food, labels that tell us where the food comes from, and if it contains genetically modified products, enabling us to make informed choices about what we put into our bodies. What we don't know can hurt us.

We often believe that only increasing yields will solve our hunger crisis. Instead, can we begin programs that allow people who are willing to farm, access to land and seeds and education about organic, sustainable methods? Can we vote with our food dollars, in favor of locally grown food that doesn't impoverish millions in developing countries by siphoning off their crops? Can we build resilient, sustainable communities where people help each other? When the majority of our people lived in rural areas, they were often able to fulfill their own needs by growing and sharing their own food. Now that most people have moved to the city, the corporations that have taken over the land don't feed themselves, and the displaced farmers have become dependent upon a broken educational system in order to rise out of poverty. It appears that the hunger of the poor is partially a choice made by the rich. Can we change the system and make this statement untrue?

Gender

A MANIFESTO FOR CONSCIOUS MEN

Presented by Arjuna Ardaugh and Gay Hendricks, for your thoughts and comments

Dear Woman:

- As a man, **I feel sorrow** that women and feminine energy have been suppressed for so many thousands of years on our planet. Everywhere we look, women have been disenfranchised. Throughout history, we have raped and abused you, burned you at the stake, bought and sold your bodies for sexual pleasure, barred you from religious and political office, relegated you to subservient chores, forced you to hide your faces and even cut off your organs of sexual pleasure.

Although I may not have done these things personally, **I am aware** of the forces in the masculine psyche that are responsible for dishonoring the feminine. **I take responsibility** for those forces and **choose no longer to be run by them**. I do this on behalf of all men, in order to usher in a **new era of co-creation**. I vow to treat your heart as the sacred temple it is, and I commit to **celebrating the feminine in my relationships**

as well as in my **relationship to all life.**

- As a man, I acknowledge that the religions of the past several thousand years have been mainly founded by and propagated by men. As men, we have often acted as if we have the last word on God and the spiritual life, when all we have really known is the masculine expression of those things. **I honor your pathways of spiritual awakening.** I commit to the **celebration of feminine spirituality.**
- As a man, I honor your **deep connection to the earth.** As men, our relationship to our planet, its resources, its weather, its oceans and its forests has for too long been motivated by acquisition and dominion. I commit to listening to the **intuitive sense** you have of **how to heal our planet** and make it thrive.
- As a man, I honor your intuition and your **ability to feel.** As men, we have often devalued feeling and intuition in favor of a view dominated by data and logic. I commit to respecting the arts of **feeling, intuition and wisdom** of the feminine heart, so that together we can integrate them into a **balanced view of life.**
- As a man, I love the **beauty of your body.** I feel sorrow that we men have

used your beauty as a form of commerce: in prostitution, pornography and the sale of products through advertising. I take a stand against any form of commercialization of woman's beauty, and I respect that **your body belongs to you.**

- I honor your capacity for peaceful **resolution of conflicts.** We men have waged endless wars over our disagreements; by contrast, it is rare to find an invasion or war instigated by a woman. We welcome your wisdom in creating a **world that can get along.**
- I honor your capacity to **listen to your body** and its needs for food, rest and playtime. As men, our preoccupation with goals and results has often driven us into a burn out mentality. I know we have often drawn you into that as well. I welcome your reminders to maintain **balance in our bodies.**
- I honor your sense of **compassionate justice.** In our justice system,, men have dominated as judges and police, built prisons, and set punishment as a higher value than restitution. I welcome you to bring the **return of the heart** to our system of justice.
- I honor your capacity to enjoy and pay attention to what is **here, right now.**

As men, we often get overly-focused on reaching the next milestone. We place so much emphasis on progress — what is new and better and faster — that we often forget to enjoy what we already have. I know that together we can co-create in bringing forth the **wisdom of sufficiency**.

I know that in **joining hands**, and leaving the past behind we can create a **synergy of our strengths**. I know, and I know that you know, that then there is nothing that we cannot do **together**.

[END OF MANIFESTO, NOW MORE EXPLANATION AND GUIDANCE]

Modern Man's Response to the Emergence of the Goddess

Back in July 2010, I published a piece on [Arjuna's] blog, as well as on Huffington Post, called Why It is Wise to Worship a Woman. That article emerged in a very personal and spontaneous way. I'd been out for a walk with Chameli, my wife, one evening. Overwhelmed with the feeling of "it just couldn't get any better than this," I popped a little update on Facebook in celebration of the goddess I'm married to. Surprisingly, by the morning there were dozens of comments. A lot were from women, but many were also from men, either wondering where they could also have the good fortune to find a goddess

similar to mine or, perhaps more important, wondering how they could discover the same spirit of deep appreciation of the feminine.

That article was my answer to that question. It reflected on the wisdom of being in worship of the feminine. Not just get along with, or tolerate, or befriend, or cooperate with. Yes, I said what I meant: to worship the feminine. That article generated almost 1000 comments with a variety of flavors. There were women who said, "Finally, you see me." There were women who said, "I don't want to be worshipped. Leave me alone." There were men who said, "Yes, I've discovered the same thing in my own life," and there were men who said, "You must be kidding. Women are all witches in disguise." There were men who said, "This sounds amazing. Show me how."

*One of the people who read that post was my old friend Gay Hendricks, who, together with his wife Kathlyn, wrote the book *Conscious Loving* back in the '80s. It was my bible back then and taught me a great deal about the practices that create healthy relationship.*

*Every Meeting is Happening in the
Collective*

Gay and I have been in continuous dialogue over the last several months about this topic. We recognize that whenever a man and a woman meet in any way, the

meeting is happening within a context of a relationship between the genders that has a history of thousands of years. I'm sure you remember the play Romeo and Juliet. The young lovers were smitten by Cupid. But this was not just a boy meets a girl in a bubble, because each was a member of a family that had been in a feud with each other for generations. This was not just 'Romeo meets Juliet'. It was Montague meets Capulet. Whether they liked it or not, they were carrying the inheritance of a conflict which they had each done nothing personally to create. The same thing would be true today if an Israeli fell in love with a Palestinian, or if a Tea Party member fell in love with a Muslim, or if a Roman Catholic from Dublin fell in love with a Protestant from Belfast.

None of these meetings happen in a bubble. They all sit within the context of conflicts that have been generated in the collective. The same is true whenever a man enters into relationship with a woman. Of course, the man himself has likely never raped anybody, or burned any woman as a witch, or denied anyone the right to vote, or forced a woman to hide her face, or barred her from religious or political office, or forced her to perform subservient chores. "No, No," such a man might say. "I'm a conscious man. I'm respectful of the feminine. I'm fully supportive that you do your thing." Whether he like it or not, that

man still carries within himself the echoes of the collective masculine and, like it or not, every woman is an incarnation of the collective feminine.

What is the Conscious Man's Response?

The elephant is in the room. Now the question comes, what to do with it. One response to this situation, becoming less popular everyday but still prevalent nonetheless, is to carry on with business as usual, the same business of the last 5000 years. The post from the summer evoked many such responses. The man carries on cleaning his gun and watching football, waiting for his woman to bring his dinner and his beer. The woman, still locked into millennia of enforced subservience, acquiesces, but bitter all the time, and holding back the treasures of her real love.

The second possibility, which began to be popular in the '60s and '70s but still is in full force today, is dominated by shame and revenge. The man becomes meek and subservient. He may even grow his hair and his beard, play the guitar, and banish even the faintest whiff of his macho past far beyond the frontiers of consciousness. He distances himself as far as possible from the brutish behavior of his father and his ancestors and bows sheepishly to the newly emerged feminine power. The woman, now rebounding in resentment of how her mother and ancestors have been treated,

becomes dominating. She becomes militant, unforgiving, and even castrating. The sad thing is, no one really enjoys this game either.

The third possibility started to emerge only in the last few years. We discover that masculine and feminine are energies, not just biological genders. Every man has some masculine and some feminine energy and so does every woman. The balance we seek, is not only between men and women but is between the masculine and feminine energy, which are to be found everywhere in life. The feminine way is neither inferior (as we had deemed it for thousands of years) nor is it superior (as some have claimed in the last decades), but it is different. Through a synergy of masculine and feminine strengths, we find the emergence of a whole that is far, far, far greater and the sum of it to individual parts.

The restoration of dignity to the feminine has happened in three stages over the last century. The first took place less than 100 years ago with suffragettes demanding the right to vote. At that time men moved from denial and ridicule, to violent opposition, to acquiescence and finally to support. The next wave came in the 1970s when women stepped forward to fully participate in the world man had created on his own terms. Margaret Thatcher and Indira Gandhi became heads of state (both in a woman's

body but doing things in a very masculine way). Women became judges and politicians and engineers and doctors and lawyers and ministers and construction workers, all roles that had previously been mainly reserved for men. Again, men's response began with ridicule in the '50s and shifted to acquiescence and then awkward support. The third wave of the restoration of feminine dignity has really happened in the last few years. It is sometimes called "The Goddess Movement." We are, all of us, recognizing that there is a feminine way of doing things just as valid as the masculine. Women are realizing that they don't have to compete or even participate in the world that man has created on his terms. We realize that there is a feminine expression to spirituality, a feminine expression to ecology, a feminine expression to leadership, and each has a huge gift to offer.

And still most men stand awkwardly aside, like a shy teenager at the school dance, wanting to join in but not knowing how.

Three Shifts Men Can Make

As men in transition, Gay Hendricks and I recognize that there are several possible shifts called for from men today, in order to reboot and to enjoy a completely new adventure.

First, the elephant in the room must be recognized. Women have been disenfranchised for thousands of years.

Feminine energy has been given very little respect and we have all lost out as a result. Even if you've never disrespected the feminine yourself, the first step is still to say, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry for what we have done. I'm sorry for what my gender has done. And I come to you with a fresh start." This is not the stance of shame, but of honesty and self-respect. Please take our words for it, and that of thousands of our colleagues and students: women love to hear this being acknowledged.

The second shift that today's man can make is to fully experience and release the hurts that he has experienced in his relationship to women. It is those very hurts, both personally and collectively, which cause men to dishonor women, if they remain banished out of awareness.

The third shift is for man to recognize how much he really loves feminine energy: how much he loves her beauty, her capacity to love, her laughter, her freedom to feel and express emotion. In some senses, she brings vivid color to his world, which can easily become black and white.

Man can discover, and then learn to worship, the feminine face of the divine. People sometimes object when Gay and I use the word "worship." They hear the hierarchy of a subservient relationship. Worship has been like that in patriarchal religions because it was a one-way street.

The devotee worships the deity, but the deity doesn't return the favor. We use the word "worship" in a completely different way, one we found in our dictionary as: "to pay extravagant respect and admiration." This kind of worship can easily be a two-way street. Gay and Kathlyn and Chameli and I endeavor to bring this quality of extreme respect and worship in both of our marriages, and it overflows into the rest of life.

When we examine the myriad aspects of social justice, we quickly find that injustice is deeply rooted in how the two genders, male and female, relate to each other in the context of society and culture. Throughout mankind's cultural evolution, the domination and exploitation paradigm has applied to the gender war as much as it has to the war against nature or the war against other religions or nationalities. If we desire a society that fosters equality and justice for all, another step towards achieving our objective is to examine how power affects gender relations.

What does gender injustice look like today? In our modern society, it takes many forms. Studies consistently show that at least *one in four women in America today* have endured some form of rape or physical sexual abuse during their lifetime. This, while growing up in a society that we like to believe is the most

liberated on the planet. In other cultures these figures rise to one in two or worse, so it may well be that America is the best of the sad lot. Still, this ratio proves we have a long way to go before we achieve equality. Rape in particular is a sickness that arises to demonstrate power and control, not sex or love. In recent times, it has been frequently used as a tool of domination in Africa in particular, and war in general: just another way to devastate a particular enemy population. In this regard, it is especially useful within cultures that either prohibit abortion even for victims of rape or incest, or cultures that place such a high value on virginal marriage by women that a rape brings shame, an inability to marry, and a lifetime of financial ruin down upon the victim. It is rightly considered to be a violent crime, and as such the reports of rape are used to gauge progress in the 'War on Crime'. Despite progressive, enlightened attitudes towards rape victims today however, many attacks against women go unreported because some in our culture continue to blame the victim as much or more than the perpetrator. They say, "Look at how she dressed; she was asking for it" and other such inanities. Until we have an environment that consistently punishes both those who rape and those who blame the victim, we will continue to suffer injustice.

Similar to rape, domestic violence is also an injustice that culturally places men in a

dominating position over women, often sanctioned or at least condoned by a majority of people. Do you call police to report seeing a woman being struck and then dragged through a parking lot by a man who appears to be her husband or lover? Do you question it deeply when a co-worker constantly sports a bruise or a scrape, brushing off your inquires with a demure, “I guess I’m just accident-prone”? When do the neighbors yell and scream loudly enough at each other that you summon the police? And how can we address the ‘silent’ abusers, those who use quiet threats, intimidation and psychological abuse against wives, girlfriends and daughters without leaving physical, damning evidence? As long as domination and exploitation form the foundation of our belief systems, these crimes will remain part of ‘business as usual’.

The oldest profession is the poster child of social injustice. Prostitution is only ever about power and control over women, and the availability of resources to women. Women are trafficked around the world and held in virtual, if not actual, bondage and slavery in order to be used by men. Given access to education and an ability to provide their own support, given self-determination and access to capital that allows them to leverage their own energy into economic success, women do not turn to prostitution as their means to survive. Again we find that the prostitute, the victim, pays the legal price

as much if not more than the perpetrator of the crime.

Any education about developing healthy relationships will help to stem the tide of teen pregnancies. It is clear that children cannot effectively raise children, and a teen is not 'adult' enough to handle this task. Yet without adequate knowledge about sex and relationships, and/or access to birth control and condoms, girls will continue to ruin their lives by having babies at too young of an age. Having a child takes her out of school or work, and it is often difficult to re-engage after giving birth. Having a child is costly, and young people rarely have the resources for child rearing without falling back into the care of their parents or tapping government assistance programs. There remains some degree of social shame and separation from having a child as a teen, and this can impact her self-esteem and the likelihood of her remaining a contributor to society. It is frequently difficult for a teen mother to regain economic stability for a decade or more following the birth of her first child.

And what about this 'economic stability' that has cropped up in the discussion about prostitution and teen pregnancy? Studies show that women are paid less than men for the same work, even after decades of fighting for equal pay. When women take time off from work to have children, they often find they return to work in a position that is 'less important' than the one they had before they

left; having shown that they value bearing children, is the business reluctant to commit to using them in important positions that they might abruptly leave soon in order to have another child? And after having two or three children, women find they have put in less time in the workforce than a similarly aged man, and thus find themselves making less than their male counterpart solely due to not having worked as much. We have come some distance in this battle for equality, but still have far to go. There are still men today who refuse to work for a female supervisor. There are still companies today that pay women less for the same work. Men continue to elbow women out of the workplace, even as they wait for their wife to bring them their dinner.

Any discussion about gender also needs to include what Riane Eisler refers to as a *caring economy*. Today, people of either gender who provide for child care or elderly care are paid wages at or just above the federally-mandated minimum; often they work as volunteers, or are not paid because they care for family members purely out of love. Many of us feel it is a travesty that hedge-fund managers (who create vast amounts of *phantom* wealth) take home literally millions of dollars in tax-preferenced compensation, while those who provide our

society with the *real* wealth of improved health take poverty-inducing salaries.

Our goal is to become aware of our attitudes towards others, and to develop so that we can connect without wounding each other. Then, gender differences can be celebrated, not regretted. Can you commit to healing past wrongs: men abusing women, women abusing men, and join us in creating a new paradigm of intimate relationship with everyone? Can we celebrate caring and compassionate acts, and reward those who perform them?

Injustice and Racism in Your Neighborhood, AKA “The Justice System”

An excellent resource on this topic is “*The New Jim Crow*” by Michelle Alexander.

Quoting from page 95:

“Imagine you are Emma Faye Stewart, a thirty-year-old, single African-American mother of two who was arrested as part of a drug sweep in Hearne, Texas. All but one of the people arrested were African-American. You are innocent. After a week in jail, you have no one to care for you two small children and are eager to get home. Your court-appointed attorney urges you to plead guilty to a drug distribution charge, saying the prosecutor has offered probation. You refuse, steadfastly proclaiming your innocence. Finally, after almost a month in jail, you decide to plead guilty so you can return home to your children. Unwilling to risk trial and years of imprisonment, you are sentenced to ten years probation and ordered to pay \$1,000 in fines, as well as court and probation costs.”

You are also now branded a drug felon. You are no longer eligible for food stamps; you may be discriminated against in employment; you cannot vote for at least 12 years; and you are about to be evicted from public housing. Once homeless, your children will be taken away from you and put in foster care.

A judge eventually dismisses all cases against the defendants who did not plead guilty. At trial, the judge finds that the entire sweep was based on the testimony of a single informant who lied to the prosecution. You, however, are still a drug felon, homeless and desperate to regain custody of your children.”

White Americans tend to think that racism and social injustice is a thing of the past: “Of course, I’m not racist, nor are most of my family and friends, so everyone must be as enlightened as we are, right? And not only am I not racist, but the culture itself has addressed the issues of inequality and therefore all residents of this country enjoy a level playing field. Equality is enshrined in our Constitution and judicial system, after all.”

Recent decades have seen an evolution of our attitudes towards crime and justice that,

seen in a broad perspective, constitute nothing short of institutionalized (and yet unspoken) racism. The primary driver of this metamorphosis is the so-called War on Drugs. Initiated by President Nixon in 1971 and gaining momentum under President Reagan in the mid-1980s, this campaign to rid the country of the scourge of drugs and the crime that sometimes follows has allowed politicians, government agencies and programs, and our courts to discriminate based on color and class: to strip people of their rights without due process of law, to label people as second-class citizens based on their ethnicity, and to criminalize the poor regardless of their race.

Let's look at the foundation of this class war. Crime and corporate welfare were major themes of Reagan's presidential campaign. At the time, drug use was falling. Violent crime rates were also in decline⁴⁹. Less than 2% of citizens listed the use of drugs as being a serious problem. The maximum sentence for a drug law violation was one year in jail. Yet, *being tough on crime* became the standard for election at all levels of government. It served politicians well to make citizens fearful, afraid of what might happen if the lawless members of the community were not severely punished and locked away for ever-longer, mandatory prison sentences. They considered drug use

⁴⁹ Less than 3% of new court commitments to state prison are for homicide.

to be a criminal problem, not a medical one. They put their efforts into incarceration, rather than treatment or rehabilitation. It allowed government to focus on “others” and to “crackdown” on them. This so-called War served to distract us from the ineffectual handling of our 1970’s energy crisis. It took our attention away from inflation rates near 10%, and an unemployment rate near 11%⁵⁰.

There are many facets to this idea of trying to end drug use in America, and all of them impact social justice. Federal government programs rewarded drug task forces with funds and military hardware and led to the proliferation of SWAT teams. Ostensibly, these new units were to focus on hostage and terror situations. Realistically, they have spent their time serving drug warrants. As law budgets exploded, so did the prison population. Mandatory sentencing, usually extremely harsh, ensure that plea bargains send innocent people to prison. The penalty for drug possession often exceeds, by statutes that a judge is unable to override, many penalties for violent crime. Drug convictions prevent citizens from qualifying for most public assistance, from being able to apply for many jobs, and from claiming education credits on tax returns. Forced to pay restitution for their time in prison as a

⁵⁰ 11% unemployment was for the population as a whole; rates for blacks were double that, and still are today, due to racial bias at hiring and the poor education many blacks receive.

condition of parole, yet unable to find a job because employers won't hire someone with a prison record, these people are swept back into prison because they are debtors to the state. Criminalizing drugs prevents users from getting treatment and counseling. Over 90% of drug convictions stem from mere possession of minute amounts of drugs, not possession for sale.

Our fear of drug users and our pursuit of drug “criminals” has trumped the restraints on the actions of the police enshrined in our Constitution. The Supreme Court has, time after time, held that police can stop and search any person they deem a potential drug law violator. This is where racism becomes institutionalized, and part of the very fabric of society. Officers are under no mandate to explain why they stop a particular person; the suspicion that initiates the search can legally range from visible evidence to inherent, or even conscious, white supremacist beliefs. Studies undertaken by the federal and state governments, the United Nations, medical researchers, and non-profit organizations that help with drug addiction, repeatedly show that drug use occurs at similar rates across all ethnicities. Yet minorities are questioned by police far more frequently, searched even more often, and make up the majority of people sentenced to jail or prison for drug crimes. White teenagers are 3 times more likely to be seen in an emergency room

for drug overdose than minorities. We've agreed as a society that it is OK to hate criminals. If you can classify an entire race of people as drug users, and therefore criminals, you are then free to hate the race. A 1995 study published in the *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education* found that when asked to describe a drug user, 95% of respondents described a black user. At that time, blacks comprised about 15% of the drug using population, about the same as today. It seems that the media campaign surrounding the War on Drugs has been successful; not by keeping people off of drugs, but by branding black people as users.

From the vantage point of the underclass, it is always hard to exceed the culture's expectation of you. It is hard to climb the ladder of opportunity when you are constantly under suspicion and denied equal protection under the law. Once accused or convicted of a crime, it is much more difficult to get a job. Nearly every application has a box to check if you have been convicted of a crime, and the majority of employers look no further when deciding which candidates to interview. The jobs most likely to be available to people with past convictions tend to be in construction and manufacturing. Both of these industries are rarely hiring in the inner city or the poorer neighborhoods, and few of the poor have access to reliable transportation that would enable them to get and hold a job far from

the bus line. A conviction for drug use is anathema to most service sector employers. The end result is that being convicted of mere drug possession is the equivalent of receiving *state certification that you are a second-class citizen*.

Of serious concern, but little mentioned, is the tragedy that befalls a family when the breadwinner is swept up in this anti-drug frenzy. Getting an attorney is impossible when one lives paycheck to paycheck, and the public defender system we believe helps the poor, thanks to TV dramas that offer a fantasy world of caring, concerned and competent legal counselors, is hopelessly overwhelmed. In one city, the 2 public defenders handle 6,500 cases per year, or *one every six minutes*. Because of mandatory sentencing laws, judges have no discretion to balance the facts of a particular case, or the efficacy of allowing the father to continue working and supporting his children, or the benefit of upholding family values and rehabilitating a user rather than incarcerating an otherwise decent and hardworking citizen. Today, around the world, one of every four persons in prison is in an American prison. A higher percentage of our population is behind bars than for any country in history. What does this say about the success of our society, or the solutions we have chosen?

Studies show that even people who honestly believe they are free of racial bias are still bound by unconscious stereotyping and judgments. Studies show that jurors become harsher when the alleged criminal is darker or “stereotypically black” and more lenient when the alleged criminal is lighter or ‘stereotypically white’. I believe that I myself am not racist, yet I was raised within a culture that has racial bias throughout its history. I cannot avoid having internalized these biases, and just as I don’t remain aware of how the air pressure pushes against my body every moment, I don’t see how these biases impact my thoughts and actions. Unconsciously, I say and do things that bear the underlying assumption that I am different from people of other races. When I feel different, I can’t help but judge and as often as possible, feel superior to the other. We can only struggle against this tendency by becoming aware of how our actions and words impact others, by listening to the experiences of others, and by becoming as empathetic as possible.

As a society, we have hard choices ahead. We will spend over \$50 billion this year on the War on Drugs. Our prison population continues to balloon, as harsher sentences lock people up for longer periods of time, as our preference to punish rather than rehabilitate ensures that most offenders released will re-offend, as we treat released

prisoners as permanently defective instead of reformed after serving their sentence, and as we insist on viewing drug use as a criminal act, not a psychological or medical problem. State governments are hard pressed to fund the prisons they already operate, and finding funds and a suitable location for the new prisons is becoming problematic. This problem is easily addressed, of course. We decide to view drug use as a symptom of a disease, rather than a criminal act. We divert the funds now used for incarceration into rehabilitation, counseling, and detox programs. We release any prisoners now held for simple possession or use. We decriminalize drugs. This allows legitimate, responsible businesses to produce the drugs and for the government to tax their sale. It eliminates the illegality of the transaction, making the drugs far cheaper than they are now. It removes the violence associated with drug smuggling, an increasing problem that kills thousands of people each year. We would do well to consider a similar plan to treat alcohol abuse, as alcohol kills far more people each year than all other drugs combined. I argue that it is immoral to allow the most deadly killer to remain legal while more than a million people serve prison sentences for possessing other kinds of intoxicants.

Making these changes to our drug laws is just the beginning. We have allowed our legal protections and freedoms to be eroded as we

combat the problem of drugs. It is difficult to see how we can return to a Supreme Court that will defend our liberties by reinstating the need for probable cause prior to stopping and searching a citizen. The way police operate today; personal curiosity is sufficient reason to search me. As long as we acquiesce to this kind of intrusion on our rights, authorities will take away our rights in the name of the *War of the day*, be it drugs, terror, or the next bogeyman. What we fail to realize as we argue these points is the impact it has on people of color as they witness, time and time again, the injustice of our judicial system. How can you endure repeatedly being stopped and searched only because of your race, while the dominant race is ignored, without becoming resentful and afraid? We cannot envision solving the problem of racism, and realizing a socially just society, without fixing our legal system.

Military

When we address issues of social justice, we necessarily have to examine our support for our military. How are these two issues related? Howard Zinn tells the story of how, as the bombardier for a flight crew at the end of WWII, he was given orders to use a new substance, napalm, on a group of German soldiers days before the official end of the hostilities. Everyone knew peace was at hand, and yet, because of the mindset that leads each and every one of us to obey without question, no one protested the unnecessary loss of life this act would cause. We accept the rationale that we are on the side of right, that our actions are good, that our leaders are infallible. In a fundamental way, this mindless obedience to authority is the antithesis of justice. We defy logic and compassion, and act instead unconsciously and without remorse. Whether in war or culture, we demonize the enemy in order to justify his or her exploitation.

Here is the challenge: *to think*. Good people do evil deeds like torture one another, fire a rocket from a drone flying 8000 miles away, launch a rocket propelled grenade into a building that is “suspected” of hiding enemy fighters without actually verifying that is indeed the case, *only when they take orders without thinking*. To think is to begin to question, and we all know right from

wrong. We correctly condemn those who merely “follow orders”. But “doing one’s duty”, being “patriotic”, even “defending freedom”... all are euphemisms for following orders, and mere justifications for not thinking. Anytime someone wraps their actions in the flag of patriotism, be alert and begin to think for yourself.

With apologies for the length, what follows are excerpts from a speech given by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. exactly one year before his assassination, titled “*Beyond Vietnam*”. I cannot be more eloquent than this:

“Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world.

Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: “Why are you speaking about the war, Dr. King?” “Why are you joining the

voices of dissent?" "Peace and civil rights don't mix," they say. "Aren't you hurting the cause of your people," they ask? And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live.

Since I am a preacher by calling, I suppose it is not surprising that I have seven major reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others, have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor -- both black and white -- through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam, and I watched this program broken and eviscerated, as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So, I was increasingly

compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. **We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem.** And so we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. And so we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would hardly live on the same block in Chicago. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent

action. But they ask -- and rightly so -- what about Vietnam? They ask if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today -- my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.

In 1957 when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: "To save the soul of America." We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself until the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear... Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America's soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read: Vietnam. It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over.

As if the weight of such a commitment to the life and health of

America were not enough, another burden of responsibility was placed upon me in 1954; and I cannot forget that the Nobel Prize for Peace was also a commission -- a commission to work harder than I had ever worked before for "the brotherhood of man." This is a calling that takes me beyond national allegiances, but even if it were not present I would yet have to live with the meaning of my commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ. To me the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I'm speaking against the war. Could it be that they do not know that the good news was meant for all men -- for Communist and capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and for white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the One who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them? What then can I say to the Vietcong or to Castro or to Mao as a faithful minister of this One? Can I threaten them with death or must I not share with them my life?

This I believe to be the privilege and the burden of all of us who deem ourselves bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond our nation's self-defined goals and positions. We are called to speak

for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation and for those it calls "enemy," for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers.

[Dr. King then details the history of our involvement in Vietnam, beginning with supporting the French with money and advice, then by installing a dictator who thwarted attempts at land reform and justice for the poor, then by actively attacking the civilian population.]

When Diem was overthrown they may have been happy, but the long line of military dictators seemed to offer no real change, especially in terms of their need for land and peace.

The only change came from America, as we increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept, and without popular support. All the while the people read our leaflets and received the regular promises of peace and democracy and land reform. Now they languish under our bombs and consider us, not their fellow Vietnamese, the real enemy. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move on or be destroyed by our bombs.

So they go, primarily women and children and the aged. They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious trees. They wander into the hospitals with at least twenty casualties from American firepower for one Vietcong-inflicted injury. So far we may have killed a million of them, mostly children. They wander into the towns and see thousands of the children, homeless, without clothes, running in packs on the streets like animals. They see the children degraded by our soldiers as they beg for food. They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers.

What do the peasants think as we ally ourselves with the landlords and as we refuse to put any action into our many words concerning land reform? What do they think as we test out our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe? Where are the roots of the independent Vietnam we claim to be building? Is it among these voiceless ones?

We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops. We have cooperated in the crushing of -- in the crushing of the nation's only noncommunist revolutionary political

force, the unified Buddhist Church. We have supported the enemies of the peasants of Saigon. We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men.

Now there is little left to build on, save bitterness.

What must they think of the United States of America when they realize that we permitted the repression and cruelty of Diem, which helped to bring them into being as a resistance group in the South? What do they think of our condoning the violence which led to their own taking up of arms? How can they believe in our integrity when now we speak of "aggression from the North" as if there were nothing more essential to the war? How can they trust us when now we charge them with violence after the murderous reign of Diem and charge them with violence while we pour every new weapon of death into their land? Surely we must understand their feelings, even if we do not condone their actions. Surely we must see that the men we supported pressed them to their violence.

So, too, with Hanoi. In the North, where our bombs now pummel the land, and our mines endanger the waterways, we are met by a deep but understandable mistrust. To speak for them is to explain this lack of confidence in Western words, and especially their distrust of American

intentions now. In Hanoi are the men who led the nation to independence against the Japanese and the French, the men who sought membership in the French Commonwealth and were betrayed by the weakness of Paris and the willfulness of the colonial armies. It was they who led a second struggle against French domination at tremendous costs, and then were persuaded to give up the land they controlled between the thirteenth and seventeenth parallel as a temporary measure at Geneva. After 1954 they watched us conspire with Diem to prevent elections, which could have surely brought Ho Chi Minh to power over a united Vietnam, and they realized they had been betrayed again. When we ask why they do not leap to negotiate, these things must be remembered.

Also, it must be clear that the leaders of Hanoi considered the presence of American troops in support of the Diem regime to have been the initial military breach of the Geneva Agreement concerning foreign troops. They remind us that they did not begin to send troops in large numbers and even supplies into the South until American forces had moved into the tens of thousands.

Hanoi remembers how our leaders refused to tell us the truth about the earlier North Vietnamese overtures for peace; how the president claimed that none existed when they had clearly

been made. Ho Chi Minh has watched as America has spoken of peace and built up its forces, and now he has surely heard the increasing international rumors of American plans for an invasion of the North. He knows the bombing and shelling and mining we are doing are part of traditional pre-invasion strategy. Perhaps only his sense of humor and of irony can save him when he hears the most powerful nation of the world speaking of aggression as it drops thousands of bombs on a poor, weak nation more than eight hundred -- rather, eight thousand miles away from its shores.

At this point I should make it clear that while I have tried in these last few minutes to give a voice to the voiceless in Vietnam and to understand the arguments of those who are called "enemy," I am as deeply concerned about our own troops there as anything else. For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese,

and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy, and the secure, while we create a hell for the poor.

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home, and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as one who loves America, to the leaders of our own nation: The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours.

This is the message of the great Buddhist leaders of Vietnam. Recently one of them wrote these words, and I quote:

Each day the war goes on the hatred increases in the heart of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. **It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military**

victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom, and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism (unquote).

These are the times for real choices and not false ones. **We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest.**

Now there is something seductively tempting about stopping there and sending us all off on what in some circles has become a popular crusade against the war in Vietnam. I say we must enter that struggle, but I wish to go on now to say something even more disturbing.

The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality, we will find ourselves organizing "clergy and laymen concerned" committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a

dozen other names and attending rallies without end, unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy. And so, such thoughts take us beyond Vietnam, but not beyond our calling as sons of the living God.

In 1957, a sensitive American official overseas said that it seemed to him that our nation was on the wrong side of a world revolution. During the past ten years, we have seen emerge a pattern of suppression which has now justified the presence of U.S. military advisors in Venezuela. This need to maintain social stability for our investments accounts for the counterrevolutionary action of American forces in Guatemala. It tells why American helicopters are being used against guerrillas in Cambodia and why American napalm and Green Beret forces have already been active against rebels in Peru.

It is with such activity in mind that the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken, the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investments. I am convinced that if we

are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. **When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.**

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand, we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice, which produces beggars, needs restructuring.

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say, "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of

South America and say, "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just.

A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, "This way of settling differences is not just." **This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love.** A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing except a tragic death wish to prevent us from reordering our priorities so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood.

This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against communism. War is not the answer. Communism will never be defeated by

the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons. Let us not join those who shout war and, through their misguided passions, urge the United States to relinquish its participation in the United Nations. These are days, which demand wise restraint and calm reasonableness. We must not engage in a negative anticommunism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy, realizing that our greatest defense against communism is to take offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity, and injustice, which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops.

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wounds of a frail world, new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. We in the West must support these revolutions.

Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes-hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores, and thereby speed the day when "every valley shall be exalted,

and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.

This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all mankind. This oft misunderstood, this oft misinterpreted concept, so readily dismissed by the Nietzsches of the world as a weak and cowardly force, has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am not speaking of that force which is just emotional bosh. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door, which leads to ultimate reality. This Hindu-Muslim-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the first epistle of Saint John: "Let us love one another, for love is God. And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth

not knoweth not God, for God is love."
"If we love one another, God dwelleth
in us and his love is perfected in us."
Let us hope that this spirit will become
the order of the day.

We can no longer afford to worship
the god of hate or bow before the altar
of retaliation. The oceans of history are
made turbulent by the ever-rising tides
of hate. And history is cluttered with
the wreckage of nations and individuals
that pursued this self-defeating path of
hate. As Arnold Toynbee says: "Love is
the ultimate force that makes for the
saving choice of life and good against
the damning choice of death and evil.
Therefore the first hope in our inventory
must be the hope that love is going to
have the last word"."

It is impossible to say exactly how much
we spend on military operations each year.
The Iraq and Afghanistan wars have been
funded outside the normal budget process
using supplemental funding appropriations:
a kind of pay-as-you-go procedure. Much of
the equipment is funded through various
portions of the "black budget", that portion
of the military's spending that is kept secret
from the prying eyes of the taxpayers in
order to prevent our enemies from knowing
what equipment we have. The official,
current-year military budget now takes up
more than 25% of total US government
spending each year, not including the

budgets for the Veterans Administration to provide soldiers with medical care, prosthetics and rehabilitation, educational funding for discharged veterans, and interest on the national debt for the portion of our debt that past military expenditures have caused. Our military has been in constant expansion mode since World War II, and it contributes to draining wealth out of our economy. It makes no profit itself; profit only accrues to the owners of weapons and equipment manufacturers. It joins oil, consumer goods made overseas, and interest on the national debt as the primary ways money leaves our economic system for foreign shores, destroying the vitality of our neighborhoods.

And what do we get in return for spending more on our military than all other nations *combined*? We get press pools and embedded reporters who feed us videos of our men and women overseas, acting as missionaries of democracy and freedom, patting the head of a smiling boy or girl in a dusty village somewhere. We get no indication of the horrors of war that our soldiers both endure and perpetrate. We get constant, perpetual war, and constant fear. Despite the decade we have spent chasing terrorists around the globe, we are still so afraid of an attack on the homeland that we endure what has been politely referred to as “security theater” when we fly. We don’t have the funds required to ensure effective

screening of cargo entering our ports, nor do we even screen parcels before loading them onto cargo planes⁵¹. Does this help you feel safe? We lost less than 3,000 people on September 11, 2001 and reacted with fear and hundreds of billions of dollars; we lose 1,100 every day due to smoking cigarettes, and several hundred more to the results of drinking alcohol, with hardly a murmur. We ignore the problems of alcohol abuse, spend almost nothing to regulate or prevent its misuse, and will allow 700,000 teenagers to begin smoking a legal product in 2011 that may well cause their premature death. Does this sound remotely sane to you?

We maintain military bases in over 130 countries around the world; some as triggers to ensure we can become involved if a particular country is invaded, some as forward deployment or staging areas that ensure the world is well-aware of our “projected” power, and some involved in active combat. Our press pools don’t examine the sex-trade and soldier-

⁵¹ Using drone technology developed for the military, the major cargo carriers will soon begin flying parcels on unmanned aircraft. In fact, all planes today could be more effectively flown by computer than by humans, though we would likely, and illogically, object to being on board a plane without a pilot. For those examples you might point to where a human was creative and managed to land a crippled plane, thinking you are proving that humans are required for safety, there are dozens of examples of crashes caused by human, and preventable, error.

perpetrated crime that surrounds every one of these overseas bases. Our soldiers return from combat, *in every war we have fought*, mentally damaged. We used to call it *shell-shock*, then *post-traumatic stress disorder*; today we call it *traumatic brain injury*. These soldiers have trouble re-integrating into peaceful society; they are startled easily by noise, they suffer flashbacks involving tragic and immoral acts they endured or participated in, they can't sleep, and can't find jobs. Although some people join the military with noble and patriotic sentiments in order to serve their country, many join because the steady paycheck⁵², room and board are superior to the life they would have if they stayed in their hometown. Because we have let the youth in our country down, some decide enlisting is a better choice, despite the risks, than remaining in their dysfunctional neighborhood, forced to sell drugs or use violence against their neighbors just to survive. We have allowed the "military-industrial complex" (famously named in his farewell address by one who should be able to grasp its power, President Eisenhower) to place military manufacturing and bases in nearly every Congressional

⁵² Note to those who claim we can't limit executive pay without losing the best people in a corporation: the military and civil service had long had a cap on salaries that keeps their members making less than they might in the private sector, yet they continue to meet the country's needs adequately.

district in our land. This prevents any legislator from voting to cut military spending; they fear facing the hue and cry of their constituency and quite possibly, losing their next election, should budget cuts close down a source of jobs in their district or state.

But to be honest, we don't have this huge budget for defense; we have it for hegemony (domination). We don't need hegemony, and we can't afford hegemony. Can we begin to solve our problems with what we have, rather than with what we have left over once our military is given the funding they demand?

Jn the hours following the attacks of 11 September 2001, fingers were quickly pointed⁵³ at particular individuals as being the perpetrators and plotters. Yet if we are honest with ourselves, the attack could have been planned in any number of countries, as retaliation for prior crimes committed by the US military or intelligence community: Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil, Honduras, Nicaragua, East Timor, Indonesia, Okinawa, Greece, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Cuba, Japan, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia... the list continues on from here. Despite claims that we are “civilized”, war shows time and again

⁵³ Some say *too quickly*: within 24 hours, all 19 hijackers had been identified, despite having been obliterated in the various plane crashes. *Amazing* detective work.

that Man is capable of inhuman and immoral behavior, even today. What does our penchant to use force to solve our problems tell us about our culture?

What are other ways that our focus on using violence to settle arguments affects America today? For one, we have let our fear of attack overrule our desire for freedom from government oppression. The rule of *habeus corpus* has been suspended for citizens and foreigners alike, meaning that the President is now allowed to say, "He's a bad guy, let's just lock him up for the rest of his life without a trial that might possibly be difficult for us to prosecute if we allow him to defend himself." As a culture, we have decided that we value safety over every other value that we hold dear. How will we respond when this suspension of our legal protections is applied to *us*? Who will be left to protest then? Imagine waking up one day and finding that the military is in charge, because the President has declared martial law. Would we protest then? Would it be too late? Would we believe the president when he (or she) tells us these steps are necessary? Or have we become so accustomed to our government lying to us that we would shrug our shoulders, and not put too much thought into what is going on? Even when Wikileaks presents us with a different view of how we are prosecuting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan than what we see or hear on the nightly

news, there is still not a whimper of effective protest against the government's actions.

Americans were proud when the U.S.S.R. dissolved into numerous republics. We had won the Cold War! Yet what really brought the Red behemoth down? They held an economic rigidity based on ideology that prevented necessary reform: Marxism/Leninism/Communism could not fail, or so they believed. In America our belief, held just as firmly, is in free market capitalism and corporate democracy. We chafe at regulation, believe in 'trickle-down economics', and look the other way as corporate funding of each election drives the legislative agenda into favoring business for the next two years. We even let a person who did not win the popular vote become President (to much derision around the world) just like your typical, rigged Soviet electoral charade.

Can we find the motivation to make the changes that will prevent a similar collapse of our dysfunctional system? Can we decide we want *defense and security*, and bring our troops home? Can we use the savings from closing the many overseas bases to pursue a foreign policy of assistance, rather than projected power? Can we educate the young worldwide, and provide clean water to every village, and begin a green revolution in energy by localizing power generation around the globe? Can we end drug violence by treating the symptoms of addiction rather

than locking up the users and burning the poppy fields? What can lift us out of this trance of believing that arming a military is necessary? What can awaken our hearts to reach out to others, not with violence arising from hatred, but with generosity bubbling up from our love? What does effective change look like to you?

A Just Politics

Government has a crucial role to play if we are to transcend racism and bring true equality to everyone. At its core, government is about people coming together and creating the structure of the commons in which we all live. It is where we determine our laws, provide for the common defense, agree on how we will trade our energy, goods and services, and share resources in order to assist the unfortunate and the infirm. Today we have plenty of laws; now political debates center more on which regulatory and enforcement agencies to fund, or not, than on what will comprise the 400 new laws we enact in an average year. Our *common defense* has morphed into *projected power*, as we play global policeman and are deeply involved in the internal struggles within many countries. We aid corporations with subsidies and tax breaks, and the lowest real tax rate in the developed world. We even provide subsidies to oil companies, despite their record profits as gas prices skyrocket. We have allowed financial companies to create new ways to bet on the global market, nearly free of regulation or oversight. And we can't agree on how to help the homeless who are becoming ever more visible on our neighborhood streets, nor can we decide that health care is a right of every citizen and is not best served by corporations who have a

vested interest in not paying for your doctor visit. This is politics as usual in America today. How might a new political landscape be different than this?

First and foremost, with one change we can alter the landscape for the better: prohibit corporations from spending one dime influencing legislation. Ban the spending of company money on lobbyists, media to advertise anything other than products available for sale, and campaign contributions. We may tell ourselves, as we reside deep within our cultural trance, that in America there is no such thing as political corruption. And yet, what are campaign contributions if not grease for favors? In the 2008 national election, 80% of campaign money flowed to candidates from corporations. Can you fault the politician who weighs a citizen's opinion, worth 20% of his funding, vs. corporate opinion, worth 80%, and chooses to vote the cause of the company? In their essence, corporations are collections of people. People should be adequate to contact their lawmakers on behalf of any particular company or issue as it relates to a company. People should be able to be persuasive if the company's interests are at stake. People should be in charge, not faceless and unresponsive directors and managers. Can we move beyond placing a company's profit above the human and environmental cost when evaluating a particular action?

Next, can we see that the 2-party system excludes too many people? We need a way for center-left, center-right, far-left, far-right, for *all* points of view to be represented. Our current system, where the DemRep party represents us all, is less than 150 years old. Since corporate contributions fund all campaigns and fund them nearly equally, the two parties represent the same interests once elected. We really have a one-party system as long as we allow corporate meddling in politics. Our system for redistricting is a joke; you can predict the winning party months, or even years in advance, no matter how issues evolve. So what might work better? Demand free airtime and other media for all candidates. Encourage debate about issues, and insist on hearing solutions, not sound bites that placate us into remaining in our trance. Devise a system that gives a real voice to other parties, such as a proportional seat legislature (where getting 10% of the vote lands you 10% of the seats), or *fusion voting*. The idea of fusion voting offers real impact even at low levels of support for a new party. It is currently used to some degree in 8 states, and was used much more widely before 1900.

In fusion voting, one candidate can be listed on a ballot as running for more than one party. Votes are tallied by candidate, rather than by party.

Here's an example; let's say the election results look like this:

Democrat Sally Smith 42%

Republican John Doe 46%

New Party Sally Smith 10%

Before the election, the New Party presented its platform, the issues and the solutions it cares about most, to both candidates. Sally Smith said she could support this platform, if elected. So the New Party made Sally Smith their candidate, despite the fact that she was already the Democratic candidate. As you can see from the election results, the Republican candidate received more votes than any other party, but what counts in fusion voting is not the party votes, but the candidate's votes. Sally Smith received a total of 52% of the vote, and thus wins the election. What is clearly seen by all however, is that without the New Party votes, Sally would not have won. Therefore, she sees the benefit of supporting the New Party platform as much as she can, in order to maintain their support for the next election. This method of counting votes allows third parties to have actual impact from the first time they place a candidate on the ballot.

For many types of legislation, including budgets and tax hikes, a majority vote in favor is not enough. We need to end the 60-vote and 2/3-majority requirements. These allow a minority of the body to control the agenda, negotiations, and action. The public's interest is held hostage by

intransigent lawmakers who insist on sweetheart deals, funding of pet projects in exchange for their votes, or forcing governments into shutdown by taking a stubborn stance that they are unsuccessful in promoting to a majority of their peers. These are all issues that, seen from the outside, appear to be corruption if not worse. A majority in favor is enough.

Include children in government, even kids have ideas: In Germany, a children's parliament is formed and they are encouraged to not only learn about the political process, but to offer suggestions of their own. A few of their ideas have included requesting softer playground surfaces, and making control surfaces lower so that it is easier for little people to access them.

We can encourage the movement to free the government's data for use by all citizens. We can explore ways to make government responsive to the will of the people, by increasing our ability to vote on subjects or laws when appropriate rather than having to await another election cycle several months from now. Of course, this would also bring an inherent need to ensure our children are educated in logic, decision making, and research skills; else we will end up with a government that is chosen and led by our weaker links.

Adopting these few adjustments to the functioning of our democracy will enhance the ability of citizens to have their voice

heard at all levels of government. Even if the public is ready, a broken political system will not willingly allow change to the degree needed now. Like an animal chewing off its own leg to escape the trap, the electorate is getting more angry and desperate, and the dominant forces more intransigent; they will not go quietly from the stage. We must take back the government from the special interests, from the big money players that often work against the people just to increase their own gain and profit, before we see the kind of violence that is marring the Arab Spring of 2011. Let's bring awareness to our political system and raise the standard for a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Justice is the opportunity to make a life: not equality, just the chance to care for family and others in meaningful, satisfying ways. Poverty is as much a result of where one is born as any fault in character. There are alternatives to our current paradigm that can be even more effective in bringing about justice and alleviating poverty. Can we see beyond scarcity, understand that the opposite of poverty is sufficiency, not wealth, and begin to provide enough for everyone? This can be the goal of an enlightened, fair and just, politics for this new century.

Ecology

Ecology encompasses more than just environment. It reflects that everything is interconnected in ways we can't begin to imagine. We have, over the last several decades, instituted many new policies and laws to address environmental issues. It is time to notice their failures, and look for new solutions.

Following the first Earth Day, Congress passed Clean Water and Clean Air Acts. Americans were appalled when a river caught fire, and Los Angeles was the butt of many jokes due to the smog its residents endured. After many years, our waterways and air both seemed cleaner. But this was primarily due to the initial blush of enforcement that follows the creation of new government agencies. As the years wore on, and Americans' attention shifted elsewhere, it became easy for legislators to gut the funding of the agencies tasked with enforcing the laws around environmental protection. Often, under new Presidential administrations, people who had recently worked in businesses impacted by the laws were appointed to head these agencies, and enforcement suffered even more.

Take the Endangered Species Act as an example of a different problem. In this model, a particular species that is categorized as *endangered*, or closing in on

extinction, is granted special privileges. Its habitat is protected from development, often stopping the plans of a large corporation to profit off a particular site. Precisely because there is an economic impact arising from protecting any one species, there has always been a negotiation process to identify what steps will be taken. Herein lies the problem: we find ourselves accepting inadequate protections *because* business argues its right to profit no matter the cost to the environment. We know, from science and its repeated studies, that as Man develops more of the environment, animals and plants find their particular niche in the ecosystem disappearing. The food they eat, the water they drink, the other animals that they cooperate with, the temperature they need; all of these requirements disappear in a cloud of dust as trees are razed and ground paved over to make a parking lot for the next big-box store on the outskirts of town. Negotiations focused on one particular species invariably give away too much of the ecosystem, and are doomed to failure. You can't save a spotted owl by preventing the paving of the 300 feet around his nesting tree; he needs a forest. We have bowed to the demands of business that they are entitled to exploit the land; in mining operations as well as by building, by taking water resources to faraway farms, and by discharging toxic wastes into the air and water. The new model brooks no compromise: pollution cannot be

tolerated, and if by mistake pollution occurs, the costs of remediation are to be paid by the polluter; *ecosystems* are saved from development, not small plots identified as nesting habitats; and even more important than these steps, the rights of nature take precedence over any “rights” claimed by corporations. Nature needs a voice in the courts and in the enforcement process, a voice louder than that wielded by money and greed. Corporations are collections of people, banding together to maximize the impact of their collected capital. That entity has no inherent rights.

On a more personal level, we are all capable of making changes that can impact our environment. Forget recycling; that is what we do when we have failed to properly design our system. Note that when you recycle a plastic bottle, it isn't made into another water bottle. Instead, it becomes a plastic chair, or a plastic part in an automobile, or is fed into an incinerator that is not in America, following a long boat ride. A better way involves reducing the amount of waste, reusing, even in novel new ways, products that are no longer needed as originally purchased, and repairing, rather than throwing away, products that would still be used if only they still worked. Refusing to buy products that do not exhibit these traits is the most powerful voice we have to force these changes upon an industry model that relies upon continual growth and

constant consumption in order to survive. Recycling does not work, as evidenced by the weather we see happening all around us. Have you heard about, or considered, a *green roof*? Adding a layer of soil and some plants to your roof allows rain to be absorbed, reduces the reflection of heat off of the roof, and gives space, especially in city environments, for plants that fix carbon and release oxygen. And they make for a more beautiful neighborhood, too!

And speaking of roofs, this is where many city dwellers end up putting their solar panels. Although solar power is not as green as we would like, due to the pollution caused and the less-than-green resource extraction methods used while making the panels, we can all benefit as more and more people get off the national grid and produce their own power locally. Our grid is in dire need of maintenance, and we endure losses as high as 50% of the power transmitted across country. As long as we get power from a grid, we need to maintain a base load: the grid always needs to have a minimum amount of charge available to users, whether they tap into it or not, and there must always be enough power generation capability in reserve to meet their erratic demand. Of course, without improved storage techniques, better batteries in other words, solar or wind power will remain a small source of power in America. Keep in mind, however, that as the infrastructure crumbles

and we have trouble finding funding to repair or maintain it, we will begin to see blackouts among those who continue to rely on the grid. Care to be one of those folks?

We don't often think about water. We can live for weeks without food, but only days without water, and minutes without air. We have had running water inside our homes for our lifetime; consequently we Baby Boomers forget that we are the first generation who can make that claim. We take water for granted, as reliable as the air we breathe. Changing rainfall patterns, however, threaten to end that reliability. The dams and irrigation pipes and canals we have built to transport water from where it falls plentifully to where it does not may become useless as the rain begins to fall in other watersheds. Already, main rivers, including one of the largest in America, the Colorado, run dry before they reach the sea. An unheard of situation in our memory, we have allowed for modern farming and irrigation to take too much water from these rivers, and some are not receiving as much rain and snowfall each year as they did when we began to rely upon them. We have put all our food into one basket: that of industrial farming, with its heavy dependence upon planting one crop as close together as possible, and thus requiring water as rainfall itself is inadequate and unreliable. Even backyard gardeners are taught to plant crops together, and mere inches apart, to prevent

the evaporation of the huge amounts of water they must provide to the plants. We find it necessary to spread out our plants, and find effective ways to pray for rain.

The latest concern about water comes from two new technologies that by design use copious amounts of water, and turn it all toxic and unusable by man: shale gas fracturing (*fracking*) and tar sands. In fracking, hundreds of toxic chemicals, in a proprietary recipe that the companies are unwilling to disclose even to government environmental protection monitors, are added to water, which is then forced under high pressure underground in an attempt to fracture the underlying shale rock. Once broken, it releases natural gas, which can be trapped and brought to the surface. Unfortunately, some of the water also makes its way back to the surface; famously flammable at the tap, or causing illness and even death to people whose wells become contaminated. The industry maintains there is no proof that their chemicals are what is setting water on fire; yet they block every attempt to draw a conclusion by restricting access to wellheads and keeping their techniques and recipes secret. Here's the reality of tar sands: a forest must be stripped off the land, then it takes four tons of sand, 3 barrels of water, 2 barrels of toxic chemicals and lots of energy, just to make one barrel of oil. Today because the technology is in its infancy, it takes more energy to make the oil

than the oil itself provides, a losing proposition. The rosier of predictions, however, have us getting one-and-one-half barrels of energy for every barrel needed in the process, not what you can reasonably call a game-changing technology. The fact that we are even *considering* tar sands as an option shows the degree to which we are wedded to oil and unwilling to consider other alternatives. Both of these technologies are water-hogs, at a time when we are realizing that water is precious. Are we willing to bet our lives that we will always have clean water when we open our tap at home?

And here is the social justice piece: increasingly, water is being privatized. Large corporations are able, in some countries and after certain legislation, to *own* the rain. In America, water is a regulated, public utility in most cases, in terms of providing water to your faucets. But in some other countries, a model is being tested where even rainfall is the property of the company that has purchased rights to it; citizens are charged for the amount of rain that has fallen that they *could have collected* and used, regardless of whether they did or not. In keeping with the theme of *America is Dead*, water should be one of the fundamental aspects of life that is managed as a commons. We can already see demonstrated in South America what happens when companies control access to water: the poor either lose their ability to drink which leads to quick

and certain death or a life of crime, or they spend so much more of their income just for water that they have little else to spend for food or other necessities, like educating the children, or paying for electricity so the kids can study after dark. Is this what we want, for corporate profits to make it more difficult for the majority of humans to live better lives? Would you be willing to pay the same for water that you now spend for coffee, several times the cost per gallon of gasoline? If you answered no, then there is work to do to build a socially just world.

Protecting the Future of Food

[Taken from *MANIFESTO ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE FUTURE OF FOOD SECURITY*. Produced by The International Commission on the Future of Food and Agriculture, 2008]

Actions required for ensuring food security in times of climate change

This manifesto proposes two levels of action: people's actions and policy actions.

People's Actions:

1. Maintain and nurture biodiversity - this begins with promoting biodiversity of seeds and breeds in farming and your own backyard.

2. Shift from chemical, energy intensive agriculture practices to ecological, organic food production.
3. Choose water prudent agriculture - conservation and water harvesting should be the primary aims instead of intensive irrigation and groundwater mining.
4. Choose and favor farmers' markets and local, organic, fresh seasonal products and short chains. In this way, the energy backpack is lightened.
5. Initiate and support incentives that make the shifts to rebuild local food economies. Farmers must be allowed to be the guarantors of the quality of the seed and food they produce without being squeezed out by the bureaucratic industrial standards of seed registration and food safety.
6. Create democratic spaces for farmers, local communities and consumers to decide how to make the transition to a post fossil fuel food system based on localization and sustainability.

Policy Actions:

1. End perverse subsidies for fossil fuel-based food economies: this document calls upon the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and regional and global financial institutions to end funding mega fossil fuel-based projects such as dam construction, pipeline and irrigation projects, and massive transport infrastructures.
2. End subsidies for agro-fuels and laws imposing their use.
3. Redirect public investment to ecological, local, and organic food models that reduce climate risks while enhancing food security.

4. Key WTO rules need to be reformed. These include:

- Allow Quantitative Restrictions: as part of the market access commitments of the Uruguay Round of GATT (Article XI), along with rules in the Agreement on Agriculture, countries were forced to remove all bans, or quantitative restrictions, on imports and exports. Developing countries had traditionally used import restrictions to protect their domestic food production and producers against a flood of artificially low-priced imports; now this mechanism has been stripped away⁵⁴. Quantitative restrictions are the only secure mechanism that can begin to build food sovereignty and food democracy, and can protect the livelihoods of our rural communities.

Because richer nations have not done much to reduce the level of subsidies they provide to their agricultural sectors, all countries should be allowed to respond to subsidy distortions by applying quantitative restrictions on imports to ensure food security.

- Eliminate Minimum Access Requirements: the WTO “minimum access rule” should be eliminated. This rule requires each member nation to accept imports of up to 5 percent of the

⁵⁴ My note: The U.S. provides 10,000 farmers with US\$3.5 billion in subsidies for cotton. This allows U.S. farmers to sell cotton in Africa for less than an African farmer can grow it, putting 10 million small farmers out of business. This is just one example of what is addressed with this recommendation.

volume of domestic production in each designated commodity and food sectors (based on 1986-88 quota levels). This rule directs domestic agriculture policies toward an import/ export model, instead of encouraging policies that favor local production for local consumption. It perpetuates a fossil fuel-based food system. The bias invariably should be to strengthen local production for local consumption and to reduce long-distance food shipments.

- Allow Selected Tariffs and Quotas: new rules must permit the judicious use of selected trade tariffs, as well as import quotas, to regulate imports of food that can also be produced locally. For developing countries, this is called "Special and Differentiated Treatment" (SDT). SDTs can help offset dumping by rich countries of subsidized commodities (i.e., selling below actual cost of production).

5. Promote bio-diverse agriculture systems and end WTO intellectual property right rules that enforce corporate concentration of seeds and piracy of traditional knowledge systems. Regarding the WTO's Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights, the following changes should be made:

- Article 27.3 (b) should be amended to clarify that: 1) No life forms of any kind can be patented; 2) No natural processes for producing plants and animals can be patented; and 3) A sui generis system can include national laws that recognize and protect

traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities.

- Article 27.1 should be changed to allow countries to elect to not patent food and medicine, and to limit the time scope of a patent or process (most often applicable to medicines).

6. Allow GMO-Free Zones: WTO policies and rulings must be reversed to unequivocally allow for the complete and explicit right of regions and nation-states to remain GMO-free to the extent that they choose.

7. Include CO₂ sequestration through organic farming into the Clean Development Mechanism, both because it takes effect very quickly and is very cost effective while contributing to rural development.

8. Ecological organic farming needs to be central to all adaptation strategies for dealing with climate change.

9. Biodiversity conservation needs to be a vital part of adaptation to climate change since biodiversity is an insurance in the context of unpredictable climate conditions.

10. Indigenous local knowledge needs to be protected and promoted as part of all adaptation strategies.

11. Remove regulatory, economic, physical constraints that impede relocalization

Ecological organic agriculture and local food production must now urgently be brought into the fold of local, national, and international efforts to combat climate change.

Some believe that the climate chaos crisis is the single biggest test of our humanity. The collective action or inaction of our

societies will determine the fate of millions of both human and animal species.

This Manifesto is based on inputs and discussions at a meeting of experts and commission members that took place in Florence at the end of 2007 under the auspices of ARSIA and the Region of Tuscany and incorporates subsequent contributions from group members.

These inputs were merged and streamlined into the present document by an editorial team composed of:

Debi Barker, International Forum on Globalization (IFG); Vandana Shiva, Research Foundation for Technology, Science and Ecology/Navdanya; and Caroline Lockhart, Coordinator, Commission on the Future of Food and Agriculture.

The Expert Working Group was composed of the following persons:

Debi Barker, IFG; Marcello Buiatti, University of Florence; Gianluca Brunori, University of Pisa; Andreas Fliessbach, FiBL (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture); Bernward Geier, COLLABORA and IFOAM Representative; Benny Haerlin, Foundation on Future Farming; MaeWan Ho, Institute of Science in Society; Giampiero Maracchi, Agrometeorological Institute, National Research Council (IBIMET/CNR); Simon Retallack, Institute for Public Policy Research; Vandana Shiva, RFTSE/Navdanya; and Concetta Vazzana, University of Florence

Does Spirituality Hold the Key?

To paraphrase Albert Einstein, we can't solve our problems using the same consciousness that created them. Over 20% of the American population self-identifies as 'spiritual but not religious', an indication that organized religion is not serving their spiritual needs. Use of psychoactive and mood-altering drugs continues to rise, even among children. If *America is Dead* is to be successful in presenting solutions that allow Man and Earth to thrive, a multitude of facts like these must be reconciled.

What Einstein Points To

Our collective consciousness evolves. From the beginning, Man has entertained the questions, "Who am I? Why am I here?" First came magic. We don't understand anything; it's all *magic* to us. Our focus is on our family; no one else will act to help us survive and to reproduce. We are hungry and we find food...or not. We don't have any sense of control, everything is magical in that we can't explain or understand it. At this level of perception, Truth (with a capital 'T') hardly exists for us. We struggle just to eat.

But then, just as at each level throughout this paradigm, we reach a point when we ask ourselves, “Is this all there is?” And because we have entertained only a portion of the world around us, the answer is a resounding, “No!” And so we grow into the next stage.

We begin to use stories to answer the great questions, to define a new Truth, but only if you choose to join the group and to have faith in the truth the stories describe. Some call this the mythic phase. Our focus here is on tribe; we have expanded beyond our family to include others in our group, life is “*us versus them*”. Many myths abound that speak to how we are the *Chosen Ones*, and the rest of the unbelievers are but heathens or animals that can be exploited and dominated or even killed. We still depend on our family, as in the magic stage, but we now help and expect help in return from a larger group, our tribe.

Around the time of the Renaissance, rational thinking and the scientific method began to take shape, moving our awareness away from story and faith and onto what we can prove and believe. We see a radically different world, full of microbes rather than evil spirits, and secular wisdom rather than religious authority. Some would say though, that scientific dogma replaced religious dogma. Our focus is now on a larger entity, the nation, which includes others who may not always subscribe to our own particular ideals. We see benefit in bringing diversity

into our worldview; our Truth becomes what we can believe, rather than what we take on faith. Slavery was prohibited for the first time during the development of this modern worldview.

After modern comes pluralistic. Our focus is global; we encompass all of humanity within our “group”, and we celebrate diversity. A key Truth of the post-modern worldview centers on how the many varied cultures and religions teach the same ideals: they differ primarily in the details and the particular context out of which they arose⁵⁵. Because our ability to communicate with people from anywhere on Earth has become ubiquitous, we can access the teachings of *all the varied traditions* for the first time. In the pluralistic view, we allow them the freedom to believe as they wish, no matter their point of view. Our Truth doesn’t have to be *everyone’s* Truth, there isn’t just one path to salvation. While there was a good amount of sense to this granting a particular worldview its space, this perspective didn’t go far enough. We thought we were offering everyone freedom, and that freedom would be enough. But really, does the Nazi soldier’s point of view deserve equal time with that of his victims? Does the corporation deserve equal time to sell their toxic wares, or should only the evidence of the harmful effects be

⁵⁵ For more information and a much better description of all of these levels and stages, please see the many books and websites offered by Ken Wilber.

published? On the other hand, can we acknowledge that there are some aspects of the Nazi worldview that are compatible, even identical, with our own? That there might be some good that comes from corporations, that they are not entirely evil?

Each transformation, from magic to mythic to rational to post-modern, has included parts of what came before, and a new sense of what is true. Just as matter grew from atoms to molecules to compounds to organisms, each level builds on the foundations of what came before. We can remember our sense of wonder and awe from magic, when we can't explain anything, and use that today, as we remain unable to completely explain gravity, magnetism, or human memory. We can understand the power of a cultural or spiritual story from our mythic phase, and craft new stories that place us within our ever-evolving understanding of Truth, that explain our place in the Universe. We can bring the scientific method to bear on questions, recognizing that new discoveries will invariably change Truth as we know it. We can honor the pluralistic view by allowing diversity to add resiliency to our group, to offer different solutions to seemingly intractable problems, and to offer alternatives when we can see none within our own limited view.

A critical aspect of the next level, which Ken Wilber has described as *integral*, is the

ability to hold multiple perspectives at the same time: to see the Truth in what has come before and to fashion relationships that include rather than demonize all beings. The world is rarely black-or-white, yes-or-no. We are constantly struggling to reconcile our emotions and our reason, our inherited proclivities with a lifetime's learning. Integral requires that we be able to look deeply into any situation, and discern what is True in this moment, apart from any automatic response or knee-jerk reaction. The focus of integral is universal, all beings, all life, and all energy. The Truth is all-inclusive of the truths that have come before, and is *expected* to evolve.

Each change of perspective takes less time; we are possibly the first people in history who may witness and participate as multiple new levels take shape: both pluralistic and integral, and possibly the next level beyond that. And each person passes through each of the stages as we grow throughout our lives. We may have a pluralistic perspective about our work, a rational view of relationships, and a mythic view of spirituality. In order to fully integrate each level and move into the next, stages can't be skipped. We can experience, fleetingly, a level far beyond our current 'home'; a rapturous sunset may evoke feelings of awe, connectedness, or even non-duality. But unless we have integrated all previous levels, we will carry but a faint memory of the feeling the next day.

What does this understanding of development bring to the discussion about spirituality? Organized religion tends to be stuck at the mythic level. Each major tradition has small groups within its ranks that are exploring the edges of rational, pluralistic and even integral perspectives; but the majority of the practitioners remain at mythic. These religions were founded on faith, not a vision that could be scientifically proven. Today we see research studies constantly that try to prove (or disprove) reincarnation, life after death, or the benefits of meditation, and there are books written about the rational Jesus, the pluralistic Jesus, and even the integral Jesus. These varied faces of the role model of Christianity remain relegated to the fringes of religion, though. Our task today is to fashion a spirituality that speaks to the 20% of Americans who self-identify as *spiritual but not religious*. Having moved through rational and pluralistic in their mental, emotional, and physical lives, how do they move through these stages in their spiritual lives, too?

Because we live so much of the time unconsciously, we tend to see exactly what we expect to see. Where we place our focus is what we notice. The Universe reflects back to us, what we ourselves are experiencing inside. This view of life helps explain

coincidences, premonitions, and why creating a treasure map so often fails to bring us what we desire. As scientists tell us, only about 10% of our actions and thoughts are conscious. Our subconscious, the result of our ancestral instincts and our own years and years of experience, is running the other 90% of the show. The human brain uses about 20 watts of power, typical of the light bulb in your refrigerator. And yet, it is capable of thought and planning and creativity that science has yet to duplicate in even the largest of mainframe computers. One of its tricks for accomplishing so much is to rely upon memories of past actions and outcomes so that it doesn't have to process and decide on a course of action at every moment. What worked before, should work again. This puts us often on autopilot, cruising through life in a rut, unaware of opportunities or changes in the landscape that might greatly impact our lives. This explains for some people, the idea of karma; what you do is what you get back. As my mind focuses on a particular action, the Universe reflects that action back to me. If I desire peace in the world, I must first find inner peace.

The problems of today: climate change, economic collapse, energy shortages, and a profound lack of inner peace, result from our current level of consciousness. We require a new consciousness if we are persevere. That can be impossible to imagine; what would we

do differently, when given a new worldview, which could solve these problems? It's like climbing up to the fourth floor of a building, finding it on fire, and then being asked to describe what is on the fifth floor that will quench the inferno. Since you've never been up there, and have talked with no one who has, how can you possibly craft an answer that is remotely true?

When Einstein says we can't fix a problem using the consciousness that created it, he's not saying the current issues are unsolvable. Rather, he points out that we won't see the answer to today's problems from within our current perspective. A better approach might be to look at what is being discovered by the few explorers on the edges of our collective consciousness. What's the cutting edge of spiritual understanding?

A New Story

Organized religion grew out our need to answer those two most important questions mankind asks. Different cultures have different creation stories, all are culturally relevant and stem from an age when we didn't understand that we lived on a planet orbiting a Sun in a system orbiting a galaxy in a Universe that might just be one of many. We were still in the mythic stage; no one had begun to use rational thought and wouldn't

for hundreds of years. Whether you asked native peoples, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians or Muslims (and hundreds of other belief systems), none had answers that made it *easy* to find an inner peace. Some sought help from multiple deities, some a single God, and some an inner understanding of the true nature of reality. Most offered a space for those interested in a serious quest for knowledge to devote their lives to the search, through prayer, meditation, and retreat. Most relied upon a text handed down ostensibly from a higher power, directing mankind on the path to happiness and fulfillment. Usually, the religion was blended into the local power structure, and often became less about peace and more about increasing access to resources to make this life more pleasant.

When your religion demands faith in words committed to paper, it is difficult to reconcile the discrepancies when rational and scientific thought proves your book to be incorrect. How do you balance believing on Sunday that Earth was created by a perfect God a mere 6,000 years ago, with one on Monday that is 13.7 billion years old as you work to save an animal from extinction? Would a perfect God have ever created a species that could go extinct? This is part of the reason it took until the mid-1800s before the idea of evolution could be mentioned; evolution implies imperfection, a contradiction if you believe that a being on a

throne is the perfect source of every creature. How can you back away from the fundamental point of view, that the book provides the word of God, without relinquishing power acquired through centuries and at such a high cost in blood and treasure? This is why religion remains mired in the mythic stage, while the rest of society has grown into rational, modern, and beyond. What new story might a new religion begin to tell?

Many have begun to articulate just such a story. Including Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow, these spiritual guides offer a story that goes like this:

As our understanding of the history of the universe increases, we see an ever-changing, constantly evolving trend towards greater awareness, creativity and complexity. There was an initial 'Big Bang' that started the whole thing. First there was hydrogen, coming together in massive Suns that grew, lived and died over billions of years. Inside these stars, as they blew themselves to bits, other elements were formed; the carbon and oxygen we depend on for life, for example. We are literally stardust. Then after about 9 billion years, there was the beginning of something new: life. This was a second 'big bang'. After another 4 billion years, and barely 50,000

years ago, man ushered into existence creativity, arguably a third 'big bang'.

For the last several thousand years, Man has become more and more aware of the universe around him, and his place within it. The Buddha, 2500 years ago, was one of the first persons to articulate the idea that our sense of individual 'self' was wrong: that each person is actually connected to the universal energy that permeates everything, that underlies all reality. He offered the notion that once we connect with that part of ourselves, once we acknowledge that we are but one aspect of All-That-Is, we become blissful, we touch eternity and perfection, we become 'enlightened'.

Understand, please, the harshness of life even as recently as 200 or 300 years ago. Any individual, save a *very few* philosophers or kings, didn't have the luxury to spend any time thinking about this. If you were lucky, you could draw on the work of those within a small, 20 or 30-mile radius for your food. If it wasn't grown or slaughtered nearby, there was no transportation system that could bring it to you reliably. Some lived close to caravan or trade routes, and had small and relatively expensive portions of foods, goods or spices available from time to time at market, but on the whole, if you didn't grow it, you didn't eat it. Your day-to-day living focused on your next meal, and how to pay the tax to the local power structure so that you could continue to live. Personal security

was never far from your thoughts; life was brutal, to be frank. Few lived beyond what we now call middle age. The promise, as offered by the Buddha, of bliss and escape from the harsh reality of what passed for life on Earth was sufficient to get many to try to emulate what the Buddha embodied.

Another enlightened being, Jesus of Nazareth, presented a different perspective on this same vision. Focusing on love for God and love for oneself, and service to others flowing from this love, he offered a vision of a heaven where life was beautiful and the problems of earthly existence dissolved away. He understood the same oneness as the Buddha, he expressed it differently because of the culture in which he lived at the time he preached. He didn't 'know how' to perform miracles, to turn water into wine, to walk on water, to heal the sick or raise the dead. But he grasped that if he surrendered control to the universal energy, allowed the creativity of God to flow through him, and acted as a channel for Spirit, then miracles would happen. People become enlightened, even if only for a moment, when touched by Spirit.

Less so in Buddhism, more so in Christianity, the ideas professed by these two awakened men have been corrupted through the succeeding two millennia by a few who use religion as a means to control the population. Please remember, when these religions were formed mankind was 1500

years away (or more) from truly knowing the Earth is round and not the center of the Universe, that scientific inquiry might lead to a better understanding of reality, that disease was not caused by evil spirits, and that communication could be more than a oral story handed down through the generations or a hand-copied book written in a language understood by a few thousand people at best.

A New Awareness

Jump to today. A few people are coming to realize that 'enlightenment' as depicted through the ages is not the end game, not the goal of existence. If we step back and look at the history of the universe and of life as I have crudely sketched it here, we see an evolution, a progression of steps that lead to more and more awareness of the true nature of reality. Science today, especially quantum physics, is increasingly demonstrating that crude Newtonian physics are not the whole picture, indeed, that concept may be entirely wrong. Recent experiments show that *awareness* is pivotal in determining the nature of some (if not all) energy, and indeed whether something exists or not. Initially, just a few decades ago, this property of matter was believed to affect only the smallest of the small, but with each passing year, the scale it is seen to affect grows. There is even credible evidence today that

awareness affects energy on our human scale. If science tells us that awareness is crucial in existence, and religion tells us the same thing, shouldn't we begin to examine how our own awareness is affecting our life?

The problem with 'enlightenment' as depicted by the Buddha as eternal bliss and relief from suffering, and 'eternal life' as expressed by Jesus as heaven, is that both concepts are the 'end product'. There is no development of what comes next, once you are enlightened or once you have gone to heaven, other than eternal perfection. Nothing wrong with that, eh? But is it reasonable to think that evolution would forge ahead for billions of years, becoming more and more complex, creative and aware, only to stop at enlightenment? Imagine if we use enlightenment as a tool, if we awaken to an awareness of true reality, and allow creativity to generate new ideas, allow the universal energy to grow and change in ways we can't of dream today. There is no end to the ways the universe could evolve, could expand, could develop to support us.

This leads some of us to suspect we are on the cusp of the fourth 'big bang', conscious awareness. This would place both ego and enlightenment in our toolbox, as Man awakens to his True Nature. We sense that Man has not yet graduated to adulthood. Indeed, in the great span of time, Man has been creative for just a blink of an eye. How

can we assume that we are anywhere near our full potential?

If your belief system holds that a Higher Power exists, you likely believe that it is a part of everything. If the Universe is only energy, manifest in various forms and densities, then not only does God already exist within me, but I am a manifestation of God now become aware. If I go as deep inside myself as I can, and you do the same, we reach that bit of God where we are One, part of the same whole. Why are we here? To manifest God in various unique ways, and to allow that Higher Power the opportunity to become aware of itself. All that remains is for us to live into this mandate of becoming aware, and to act as if we are all truly One being.

We humans today, living in the developed world, for the most part have lives of luxury and privilege unimaginable just 200 years ago. We, for the first time in man's history, have access to all the great wisdom traditions. I can tap into the flow of information we call the Internet and read communications from hundreds (or thousands) of enlightened beings. I do not fear my next meal will not come because it will rain and ruin my crop, my only source of food. I am not afraid that a wild animal will attack me while I traverse the ground in front of my hut. I understand more than any generation before me, the true nature of the universe.

And what is my ‘True Nature’? The biggest issue I face today, arguably, is getting past my own sense of separate self. I use the term ‘ego’ here, not meaning ego in the sense of Freud, but rather the construct that exists in my brain that tries to control me, to protect me from harm. My ego sees separation, there is an ‘*I*’ which is not connected to, or part of, everything else around me. My ego has to keep me safe. My ego receives billions of bits of data every second from my various senses, and has to sort from that pile the bits to bring into my conscious awareness. As a result, the vast majority of information I could use about my situation fall away unnoticed. The ego must rely on tricks to ensure my survival, tricks such as acting out of habit, without conscious thought. If a situation presents itself that appears similar to one I’ve handled in the past, why re-invent the wheel? Why not take the same action I did last time? And if I do give it a moment’s thought, the ego would have me look into the future and imagine the possible outcomes, especially the ones that may harm me, or look into the past to remember any pain or sadness that happened last time. You see, the ego is all about remembering, limiting my options, and worrying about potential futures that may or may not occur, not about enjoying the present moment. As long as the ego is front and center in my awareness, I will not be paying attention to what is happening right now. When I keep my

awareness on this moment, and see the chatter of my ego as a tool, not as my controller, I remain open to hearing that small inner voice that whispers and nudges me into new reactions and onto new paths. Phrased another way, I listen to God and lean into what I am told. It is usually a matter of sensing, rather than thinking about, which way to step, what words to say, how to love, and what to give in any moment.

Integral theory points out that as each level transcends the previous one, it creates a new truth that incorporates the best of every level that has come before. The primary shift needed is to allow each level its truth, but to manifest a greater truth that serves every being. Our problems today stem from each level, be it fundamental, conservative, or liberal for example, believing it has the ultimate truth, not a partial one. An integral perspective finds space in the room for everyone, while organized religions bar the door against infidels. At the rational level, for the first time, we saw the recognition that all people should be treated equally and justly. This new truth took the best from the fundamental level before it that believed we could only offer equality to those of our own tribe, and expands it to include more of life. Taken seriously, this realization would begin to address the issues of war and racism. Recognizing that salvation can occur using many paths, not just the path dictated by my religion, removes the need for Holy War.

Seeing similarities, rather than differences, removes the tendency to be racist.

This is not to say that there is no room for a particular religion, such as Christianity. Books have been written, and sermons delivered, that identify how Jesus speaks to all stages: magic, mythic, rational, pluralistic, and even integral. We hear only what he says as it relates to our own individual level of development. Your own ability to transcend levels is often easier if undertaken within the structure offered by your culturally indoctrinated religion; for example, if you were raised Christian, it may be easier to look to the contemplative Christian traditions than to try to assimilate truths expressed from within a different culture like Hinduism. Here I am not calling for you to abandon your own religious beliefs; rather, I ask that you look to the best of your tradition, and begin to walk the talk.

How can we begin to deepen our understanding of these matters? The most common way is through meditation or prayer. Meditation and prayer, not meaning a pleading request for riches issued to a Holy Father who sits on a throne in Heaven but instead an open connection that quiets the mind and senses what is best for this moment, each train you to separate your sense of self or your true self from each individual thought. You realize that you are not your thoughts: you feel sad, but you *are* not sad. You see a tree, but you *are* not the

tree. You remain in the witness mode when you are in the moment, touching, sensing, feeling, but not *being* what you sense. You fundamentally grasp that this too is subject to interpretation.

A Deep Hunger

We are taught to see the world around us. Our parents point to objects and name them. We witness behaviors and assume that they represent the best way to cope with or to manipulate, the objects and people that populate our awareness. We model our own behavior on what appears to achieve satisfactory results for others. We repeat strategies to solve problems even in instances when a particular strategy is inappropriate or problematic, because we haven't learned any other way to respond. We operate mostly unconsciously, responding to emotions and feelings without actually being aware of what is driving our behavior. We pride ourselves on our logical thinking; even as our ego takes us on paths of fantasy or deludes us into believing we are in control of nature or other human beings. We equate attention with reward, and we play "roles" in order to maximize the attention we receive. We measure our accumulated rewards against the rewards garnered by others, and judge ourselves successful or not, loved or not, based on how

we stack up. We fear rejection because that might strip us of our self-esteem, take away our stash of markers that prove our worth, or send us a clear message that we are just not good enough.

We learn by believing what we are told, by taking everything we hear on faith, and by what we think we see happening around us. Usually observing with incomplete information, we often draw inaccurate conclusions about why others act in a certain fashion, or why particular events end the way they do. We grant our caregivers high esteem, and take what they tell us as gospel. This is what is so insidious about cultural stories such as Santa, the Easter Bunny, or the Tooth Fairy. We are told these fables while we are at an age when we believe everything we are told. The foundation of our world is shaken when, a few years later, we discover that there is no such person as Santa, no such late-night travelers as the Easter Bunny or the Tooth Fairy: that gifts are given and eggs are hidden and coins placed under our pillows by our parents instead of some fantastic, magical creature. What other stories and ways of being are also a lie? And in what other ways are we domesticated, acculturated by myths (like the origins of our currency, or the invincibility of our military), or controlled through deceit? Even when we can logically see how our world has been taught to us, sometimes through lies, we punish ourselves

endlessly. We fail to address the emotional scars that remain, and by pushing those emotions into the dark corners of our minds, we leave them to spring out at the most inappropriate times, to ruin the best-laid plans, to spoil the deepest relationships by leading us to act out when stressed.

Justice means we pay once for a mistake. We don't offer ourselves justice; instead, we live ruled by fear, violence, and addiction. We self-medicate using alcohol or drugs, using TV or Internet surfing, misusing food, and by abusing others. We hope that somehow, this torrent of pain will stop when we succeed in convincing ourselves we are better than others, or when we have so numbed our emotions that we no longer feel or care. Our biggest fear is that if we express ourselves as we truly are, we will be judged and rejected by those closest to us. We perpetuate roles and stories to create the image we hope will lead others to love us. We let others tell us how to live, assuming that they are actually telling us what it will take for them to love us. We can't accept ourselves, and so we turn to others for instructions on how to live small and unobtrusively.

We tolerate the abuse from others, because ultimately, we are abusing ourselves even more. If we find more self-love, if we can stop the questioning and judging voice of our ego long enough to see ways in which we are adequate, we can overcome this cycle of self-

abuse. We can't accept others into our life with unconditional love until we can find that love for ourselves, inside ourselves. The outside only mirrors what is happening inside of us, all the time. Inner turmoil? Outer drama. Inner hate? Outer violence. Inner love? Outer compassion. What are you manifesting in your world today?

When you adopt a new worldview, you gain the energy that was driving your old stories and fears, and can use it to fuel your new aspirations. This is the magical result of freeing those old roles and blossoming into the person you know yourself to be. In one way, carrying all that old baggage for all these years has made you stronger. Once you drop the bags, that strength can be put towards taking actions more in alignment with your true self, to serve the ends you want to accomplish with this "one wild and precious life"⁵⁶

Bringing Spirituality to Life

What are your core, fundamental spiritual values? Are they: Love God, Love your neighbor, and Love yourself? Is it to be generous, even when it's not easy to give? Do you value truth telling, or patience? Most importantly, how do you bring your core values into manifestation in every moment?

⁵⁶ Quote from Mary Stewart, American poet

If technology, especially mobile computing and communications devices, are a part of your life, then you may not find the time to get away, to go on retreat, to nurture the peace that comes with silence. If you are not mindful of how tech can insinuate itself into your lifestyle, coming to dominate your time, energy and thoughts, you can quickly become unconscious not only to what is happening right in front of you, but deep inside your heart. Are technology and spirituality incompatible? Certainly not! But remembering what is important in any given moment requires a certain mindfulness and an eagerness to bring your core values to light.

For many people, living a life full of relationship and connection is what is most important. While technology can help maintain connections, and even begin new ones, all too often the device takes center stage, not the interactions it fosters. Do you check email in the middle of the night, on your back from the bathroom? Is that feeling just a little too self-important? Are you able to take a Sabbath from your electronics: no TV, Internet, email, texting or phone, one day each week without feeling crazy from withdrawal? Do you control where you place your attention, or do your devices have that responsibility? Throughout the day, can you identify moments (or hours) when interruption is counterproductive, and either turn your phone off, or put it away where you

won't notice an incoming call or text message?

It is always easier to identify problematic behaviors when seeing them in someone else. Without a certain distance from the object, it can be easy to miss the obvious⁵⁷. This is one of the benefits of meditation; it allows you to develop your ability to monitor your thoughts as if they belonged to someone else. You can begin to stop programmed, unconscious behavior and emotional reaction, and instead make choices of new ways to react to a particular situation. Getting off the autopilot can be one of the most exciting aspects of waking from the trance of modern life. Controlling where you place your attention, and cultivating emotions that serve you rather than cause you troubles, can bring you greater peace of mind.

Having a goal gives your life purpose. Do you know why you are here, in this life, at this moment in Man's evolution? People who are truly happy know their purpose, are focused on their heart's goal, are fearless about pursuing justice for all, and

⁵⁷ This is why I have long encouraged people to travel outside their native land; not as tourists, but in a manner that allows them to become embedded in a different culture. Stay with a family for 3 months. See weddings, funerals, birthdays, and market days. You'll come away not only with a greater appreciation of how we are all connected in very basic ways, but it will become easier to see problems, and possible solutions, once you return home.

relentlessly spread love among all they encounter. Does this sound like someone you'd like to be? We don't all have large roles to play, or small ones; but we each have our own role to play.

Spirituality is not about achieving 100% happiness, living forever in a blissful state. Just as physical materialism means we always reach for better *stuff*, spiritual materialism means we always reach for a better *self*. You fall into the trap of thinking that, once you've attained enlightenment, life will somehow be better. But that's just the ego talking, generating a new dream of happiness, just like a new car. It tells you that once you reach nirvana, you'll be free of irritation, healthy and wise. It tells you that you need a vacation, before you are really ready to grow. It tells you that you need to have a perfect plan, before taking your next step. But that is always in the future, and you must still depend on your ego to get you there. Think your ego wants to work itself out of a job?

So what is spirituality about, if not seeking perfection? It's about giving every bit of your Self to every moment, fearlessly, not holding back. It focuses on now, not what used to be wrong or might wrong later. We ask, "What is wrong now, and how can I help? What is right now, and how can I learn from it and enjoy it?" It's learning to let relationship dominate and give direction, not physical stuff. It's about asking, "What is mine to do,

what is mine to see?” and not asking, “How can I manipulate this to meet my vision of perfection?” It’s letting technology help you connect, but not worshiping the technology, visiting only sites that reflect your own limited perspective, or letting it dominate your life. I don’t mean to offend, but really, there is something sad about a family spread throughout the house, sending texts and emails and Facebook updates to coordinate each person picking up dinner from the kitchen and eating alone in their room.

Spirituality accepts that the world is just where it needs to be, in this moment. Evolution, meaning eternal change, has brought us here. The Universal energy underlies everything and everyone; spirituality can’t be excluded from every moment, because it *is* every moment. It includes pain and suffering, as well as hope and inspiration and salvation. If you throw a puppy into the river, it swims. You don’t need to teach the puppy how to swim. Likewise, you already know how to be spiritual, no lessons needed. Know that the need to control arises from the ego, not your spirit. Stop grasping at the things or people you want to remain in your life; enjoy them while they are here, feel their love while you can. Allow life to unfold, in as many beautiful ways as it can. Be grateful for the chance to watch and to taste what new experiences come your way.

Inner Peace

There are many ideas that help us find an inner peace that are independent of any particular religion. Here's just a partial list:

- **Be generous.** Few joys can match the feeling you have when you have given of yourself to another. But even more than simple generosity, giving to a charity or buying a meal for a friend, explore how you feel when you give beyond what is easy or comfortable. Ask, "How much am I willing to let go of, in material goods, to ensure that all have an equal opportunity?" Especially in America, we use far beyond our portion of the world's resources and energy. Can we discover how much is 'enough', and begin to use that as our benchmark instead? Conversely, can we be generous by giving more of our time and attention, rather than our material possessions?
- **Interpret generously.** Far too frequently, we take the first, knee-jerk reaction to a situation as the only or proper response. We are cut off on the freeway, and we react; with anger, calm, revenge, frustration or some other feeling that colors our perception of the rest of our day. If we pause for just a brief moment, we can easily see that we have a choice in

every moment. We can *choose* how we feel. Rather than be angry at the person who cut us off, for taking our space or making us late, we can instead choose to have compassion for another who is so asleep at the wheel, or who themselves are so late that they act thoughtlessly. We see the bigger picture, that a few seconds lost here on the freeway are not the end of the world.

- **Know your story.** Understand the grand cosmic story; that we are literally stardust that has evolved to a level of consciousness that allows it to see and know itself. We don't need to understand every detail of every step along the way, but we do need to grasp the broad sweep of history and evolution, to see that we stand on the shoulders of everyone and everything that came before us. The salmon that is jumping the dam to return to its spawning ground is the result of 13.7 billion years of transformation and development, just as I am. We each deserve to be here. On a more personal level, I know that my ego tries to conserve energy and react based on what has worked in the past. Knowing my own story makes it easier to catch my ego in the act, and to choose generously instead.

- **Honor your instincts.** In the long term, we tap our instincts, honed and evolved through thousands of generations of ancestors who managed to survive long enough to bear children. Taking the deep time view means we understand that we have inherited proclivities, an unchosen nature that leads us to act in ways that foster our own survival. For example, we crave sugars, salts and fats. It was hard to find them hundreds or thousands of years ago, and having a craving meant we ate as much of them as we could find. Today, they are readily abundant, and our craving for them leads to health problems: obesity, diabetes, and heart attacks. Honoring our instincts recognizes where the craving arises from and lets us make a proper choice of action, overriding an instinct that no longer serves us. Most of us say, 'I'll never do that', but we do, or we say 'I'll do that' but we don't. Honoring and respecting our instincts means being conscious about why we act as we do, and making choices, not knee-jerk reactions, in every moment. By doing what is natural, instinctual and unconscious we often leave a wake of pain.
- **Everything Changes.** Chaos catalyzes growth, progress and

evolution. We lack inner peace when we become attached to something or someone and then lose them, as we always will. We lack inner peace when we want something we don't have, and we focus on that lack. We may, for a time, finally get what we desire, but our mind deeply and instinctually knows that this is only temporary; this too, shall change. Even while we have it, we fear the loss that we know is inevitable and work unsuccessfully to prevent it. We can learn to trust that chaos is inevitable and even that it brings hope and possibility. We can begin to embrace change for the increased understanding it can provide. We can see that Nature uses chaos to identify what is working, and to discard what no longer does work in favor of testing new, ever-more-complex solutions.

- **Know how pain arises.** Like most people in today's culture, I fail to grasp that no one can hurt me; only I can hurt myself with what I choose to believe to be true in this moment. And that means that I can ease the pain, no matter the situation, by questioning the truth of what I believe is causing the pain. Take the death of a loved one, for example. I can focus on the loss, the impossibility of ever sharing another enjoyable moment of

love with this person, and grieve their loss with feelings of anguish and pain. I can descend into depression, possibly to the point where I become dysfunctional, even suicidal. Or I can celebrate that they were a part of my life, and give thanks that their energy has become part of me, has helped to shape me and create the perspective through which I perceive this world. I can recognize that they are in my heart, always, and that their influence on me is evident in my behavior, if I just look closely. Take a moderately painful memory and ask yourself, “How can I interpret this in a more generous way? How can I *not* see myself as victim, or see my own contribution to the problem?” We instinctually blame others for everything that doesn’t work in a relationship, and claim responsibility for everything that does work. Ask yourself, “Is this way of seeing this situation 100% true?” We quickly see that it is not. There are many ways to view any situation. How do our perceptions, our feelings, change when we grant some validity to other viewpoints? How does our sense of inner peace expand as we try on multiple truths and multiple perspectives?

- **Be a blessing in the world.**
Communicate your gratitude to others for the myriad of ways in which they have helped you, have served you. Acknowledge, take responsibility, communicate an apology and atone when possible, for the myriad of ways in which your unconscious reactions have hurt them. You will find that admitting your realization that you have hurt another is enough to open hearts and to transform relationships. You can literally change the past by changing how you view it: by beginning to see the love inherent in every situation rather than the hate, to see competence rather than failure, by taking responsibility rather than assigning blame. See these changes in yourself as well as in others. Bless the world with your light.
- **Support others who do this work.** We can't all be leaders, nor do we need to be. For every Rosa Parks, there are thousands of people marching in the streets, or supporting her family as she spends time in jail, or raising awareness in society as a whole, or spreading her message in ways that inspire others to join the movement. Everyone has a niche, and your niche *will* change. Find a group that is already doing the work that calls to you, and join it.

- **Find your passion.** Awaken at 3 am and lie in bed, asking yourself what problems you see in the world around you that truly break your heart? Then ask yourself, “What really lights me up? Where do I find the joy so profound that I lose track of time?” Nearly half of your heart is comprised of neuronal cells, not muscle cells. There actually is a wisdom that comes from your heart. Your heart, your inner voice, can show you your path by connecting what lights you up with what breaks your heart. Your legacy arises in your joy. Make a difference in our world.
- **Understand reality.** Know that you create your reactions, you notice where you place your focus, and that the Universe reflects what’s going on inside of us. Thought and emotion bind together into a powerful creation machine, like an electromagnet becomes a powerful attractor. But when we allow distraction and fear to blind us to possibility or shrink from taking action, we become small. This is not about creating a dream board, or attracting wealth by focusing attention on dollar signs. It is about choosing in each moment, to step into the larger person we can be.
- **Value integrity.** You can lose your lifelong reputation with an instant’s

indiscretion. Maintaining a vow during a challenging period may seem impossible; but it is easier than having to regain trust once trust is lost. Use the 12-step approach of maintaining your promises one 'moment' at a time. I can't possibly keep my vow forever in this moment; I can only keep the vow in this second as I take my next step into my future. Keeping your word, taking only what is freely offered, speaking only truth, as you know it; all are disciplines that require constant attention and care. Always acting with integrity is priceless.

- **Be patient.** Needing anything to happen and experiencing frustration, as it takes longer than we wish, is a symptom of our attachment to a particular outcome. As we deepen our understanding of change and overcome our fear of loss, we gain a sense of equanimity: this too shall pass. What is there in this moment that can teach me, enlighten me? How can I express my love more effectively *now*? Asking these kinds of questions rather than seeking a particular outcome in any situation frees us to experience and enjoy what is blossoming in our world, no matter what it may be. When everything is OK, there is peace.

- **Reject criticism.** If you are like me, hardly an hour goes by that my *monkey mind* doesn't identify something to criticize. It may be something I do or say, something I'm wearing, or something I'm planning for the future that it thinks will turn out badly. It might be something someone else is doing, saying, wearing or planning. It might be the weather. Whatever it is, the ego is all about criticizing, which arises from the sense of separation we inherit from being raised within this culture. When you are separate, you can judge, compare, and feel superior to everything outside of you. But here's a novel idea: focus attention on appreciating, rather than criticizing, what you are experiencing. Instead of thinking, "that's an ugly shirt he's got on," appreciate the idea that he is a different person and has an unusual perspective that you can share and learn from. Chances are, it will be difficult to do in the beginning; you may not be able to go three minutes without automatically criticizing someone or something. But with practice, you can morph criticism into appreciation, and find that the world responds much better to the latter. This is an intense and extremely useful practice to consciously bring to

your intimate relationships, too. Imagine how much happier your partner will be when you cease your criticisms, and instead either appreciate them for what they offer you, or focus any issues or complaints on how you yourself are feeling and trying to cope, rather on laying blame at their feet.

- **Accept appreciation.** Rarely do we accept appreciation well. We are very good at deflecting it: someone says, “You did a great job on that project!” and we minimize our own efforts, “It was the whole team” or dodge the compliment in one of many other ways, “It was nothing”, “Anyone could have done it”, or “I could have done it better, but I ran out of time”. Notice when you are deflecting appreciation or gratitude, and instead, take a few seconds just to soak it in. No need to comment, just bask in the appreciation being expressed. Then, if you still feel like it, deflect. Soon, though, you will find yourself just saying, “Thank you for noticing”, instead of trying to appear humble or modest by discounting the opinions of others.
- **Use urgency.** When you are attacked, when your freedom or your way of life or the life of your child is threatened, you respond with an

energy, an urgency, that brings all you have to bear on the problem. You will do whatever it takes, to *create a miracle*. You sense that what must happen, must happen *now*. Tapping into this sense of urgency in everything you do helps to focus your attention and your energy. This is not a call to feel the stress of not having enough time; rather it is a reminder to become fully engaged in everything you do.

- **Walk, and talk, your talk.** Do you feel comfortable discussing spirituality? Are you afraid it will be confused with religion, or that you will be judged by your views? Would it surprise you to find that most people believe as you do, but everyone is afraid? We haven't the luxury of waiting until everyone is comfortable having real, authentic, and deep conversations. Begin with family and then friends, but begin to have conversations that matter. We need each other, let's talk about it!

If we can come to be focused, quiet, to see possibility and to notice all life, we will naturally understand the Golden Rule. We will naturally live with inner peace and dignity, and express our profound respect for all beings. Are you curious about how that can feel? Live into it now. It is our next step.

Just One Example

What does this new way of being look like? What's even one example of how this translates into a new way of relating to loved ones? When are we most challenged by our limited perspective?

If you're like most people, when you're caught up in an argument with your partner, family member or colleague, you're locked into anger and thinking you're right and the other person is wrong. A new approach involves understanding that when you *change your own presence and state* in the disagreement, you're then able to disrupt the argumentative loop, which ordinarily leads to an ugly downward spiral. So, here's what you can try the next time you're in an argument with someone you love, even when you *know* you're right:

- First off, see if you can get in touch with what you might be afraid of. Underneath our anger, there's always some kind of fear. It might be fear of rejection, fear that you will lose something dear to your heart, or a fear of failure.
- Acknowledge to your partner that you're afraid, and why. When you go from saying what you're angry about to saying what you're scared about, it shifts the whole tone of the

conversation. Naming the fear enlists your partner's help in avoiding that outcome. When you say "I'm scared," it instantly creates a connection with your partner, and you're able to shift out of the argument just like that. And, THEN you have the opportunity to bring the conversation to a new, more loving and conscious level. Take a deep breath and say something like, "*I'm afraid we're not going to stay together through this.*" Or "*I'm afraid you'll leave me.*" If you have difficulty identifying your fear, you can just say, "*I'm afraid, and I don't know what I'm afraid about.*"

It may be just two steps, but it is a priceless, miraculous practice. Don't be afraid; take the next step to elevate and bring more magic to your relationships!

Short Tips

J'm like you, in that I love to read a list of short suggestions whenever I am faced with bringing change into my life. There are problems with this approach, of course: it allows us to feel like we are actually making significant progress while taking very small steps, and because our world is so interconnected, one proffered solution may contradict or contravene another. Having made this disclaimer, here are some ideas you might begin to work into your daily routine, or that might help you find other ways not on this list to manifest the future we need.

- Forego building one state-of-the-art bomber and use the funds instead to provide mosquito nets to everyone sleeping in the tropics without one, to curb malaria. Carry this idea forward and cure sickness, end hunger, support women and children, educate everyone by eliminating all of our bomber forces
- Eat less meat. It takes 14 calories of energy for every calorie available to humans in the meat itself, to put the meat on your plate. In fact, livestock accounts for 18% of all greenhouse gas emissions, and include large amounts of methane, a gas that is more than 20

times worse than CO₂ in causing climate change. Put another way, buying a kilogram of beef at a grocery store, just over two pounds, is the equivalent of driving three hours while leaving all the lights on at home

- Institute a national sales tax in the USA, and abolish the current tax code. Reward saving, punish spending. Allow food and energy purchases tax free to help the poor. Or, reward work, savings and investment by making wages, interest, dividends and long-term capital gains (on assets held longer than 5 years) tax-free. Instead, tax what we don't want: pollution, layoffs, short-term speculative trading and currency trading
- Drop the colonial relic of the Imperial measures system, and go metric like nearly everyone else in the world today
- Abolish the “Fractional Reserve System”. Today, money is not backed by any wealth. It is created when a borrower agrees to repay a loan. (See www.ethicalmarkets.tv, search for “Money as Debt”). This creates a spiral wherein foreclosures of some loans are assured, or lending must increase faster than repayment. Foreclosures lead to poverty, and increased lending feeds increased consumption of resources. Decide

upon a different method to control the supply of money, one that reflects real wealth, not just currency

- Remove the cap on wages subject to Social Security tax. The current system, where tax stops being collected once wages exceed a certain (inflation-adjusted) figure, results in an unfair tax directed at the poor. Let all who work pay into the system at the same rate. Begin means testing of payments from the Social Security plan. Move beyond the feeling of entitlement that insists the government give us money when we stop working.
- Limit or eliminate malpractice punitive awards and bring health care costs under control. Prevent drug companies from profiting from patents created using public funds or by students in publicly built university laboratories. Pay doctors only when we are well; encourage them to keep us healthy, not profit only when we bleed.
- Investigate creating a small group of 3-5 family members or friends who agree to help each other through major health issues. Fill out your living will and health care proxies with these people as your agents. Band together with other similar groups, so that when a member is ill

and needs care or resources, there are many members able to pitch in. Members advocate for the ill member, help with assisted care and finances, and run errands as required.

- Change the packaging of all products to a material that is biodegradable in landfills and non-toxic if burned.
- While you still have access to the necessary equipment, set up a solar-powered radio transmitter that can broadcast at low power on an FM frequency. This will facilitate spreading the word about what your neighborhood is accomplishing.
- Refuse, rethink, repair, reuse and recycle⁵⁸.
- \$10 per gallon gas. It will get there eventually; if we charge it now and use the excess to build our way out of the oil paradigm, we are better off than if all that money continues to fund terrorists around the world.
- Require everyone age 18 in the US (and eventually worldwide) to perform one or two years of community service, either locally or abroad.

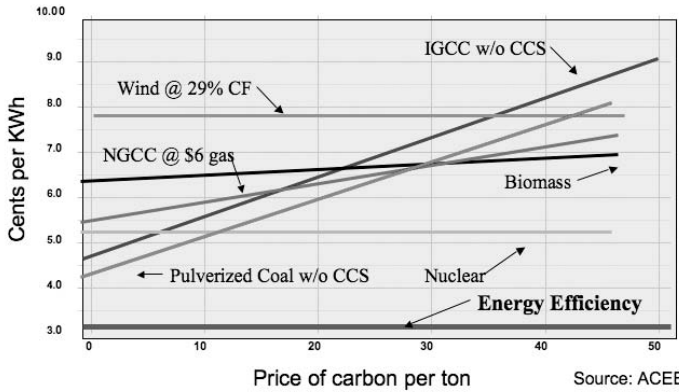
⁵⁸ Every day, 4 million plastic cups are used and not recycled on American airlines. Over 40 million paper cups are used daily, most not recycled, and most for coffee. How about a law that everyone carry their own cup?

- Eliminate the current government subsidies on everything, including oil, farming and tobacco.
- There is a better way to eat and it begins with restoring our traditional and natural foods. Nearly every food we eat in America today is not food, but a food *product*. Because of federal subsidies to corn farmers, most processed foods contain high fructose corn syrup, an ingredient that is leading the charge into our epidemic of obesity, diabetes, and heart attack. The recovery of our health is tied to the recovery of food, since food itself is medicine: not only for the body, but also for the soul, and for our spiritual connection to history, our ancestors, and the land. Whole foods, raw foods, and in short, *real foods*; these are the keys to healthy communities.
- If you insist on having government subsidies, give them to alternative energy research and development.
- Face your fears. Step beyond the same thinking that created the fear that limits you, that clouds the learning in each new experience, for you cannot overcome any problem using the same thinking that created it. Fear cannot heal us. Open your heart to others without fear, and find the love, not the fear, in all beings.

- Eliminate earmarks as a tool of legislators. What they hide can hurt us. Insist the any new spending program include the method to be used to pay for it, or cuts to be made elsewhere in the budget.
- Create one international space agency. Pursue a manned visit to Mars, if for no other reason than to spark the imagination and creativity of our young people. Run the day-to-day space operations in the Russian manner, not the American way. Life itself is not scripted, why should life in space be any different?
- Invent a battery that stores more than a few hours of power. Change all electronics to accept the same transformer, or to recharge wirelessly, so that 'wall rats' and tangled cords can be eliminated. Change all electronics to function even when the battery output is 50% remaining (current electronics show 'battery dead' at 90% power remaining).
- Move towards worldwide environmental regulations. Revise (i. e. strengthen) and enact the Kyoto Protocol in the U.S.
- Eliminate internal combustion engines in automobiles worldwide.
- Move beyond biodiesel as a solution to needing so much oil. We need more

than our little finger in the dike, and we can't continue to pour food into cars.

- Overcome the resistance to efficiency and conservation to meet our energy needs. Find ways to conserve, even before investing in renewables. This approach minimizes the amount of energy you will need. In this table, note that efficiency is far more cost effective than any other form of power generation:



- Cut banks from being global entities to being what we think they are, local places where one neighbor's money helps another neighbor buy a home.
- Place a 1% tax on all foreign exchange transactions, to help reduce the speculation in different currencies. Funnel the proceeds to the UN for funding social programs that ensure adequate clean water, food, shelter

and medical assistance for the 2 billion of the Earth's population that has never even seen money.

- Rewrite mortgages that are 'under water' today to the current fair market value. The bank takes 50% of the hit, the homebuyer the rest (by the way, the FDIC has already done this for some of it's borrowers).
- Require government spending to be based on project or task without regard to annual fiscal calendars. Currently, all government agencies ensure that their entire budget is spent, necessary or not, by the end of the fiscal year in order to avoid the appearance that they need less funding for next year. This is absurd. Money should only be spent as required, and for the purpose intended when the money was made available.
- Install true pricing requirements. Include the actual cost of transportation, including the costs of clean air following the burning of dirty fuel and the cost of eventual disposal of the product in an environmentally sound manner, in the actual purchase price. Factor in the cost of treating workers for pesticide exposure into the price of agricultural products, or the cost of providing health care to every worker in the

country into each product, for example.

- Establish a minimum living wage that allows workers to adequately raise a family on a single income. Require all employers to pay this living wage.
- Use natural gas during the transition away from petroleum and into clean renewable energy resources. *Stop using oil now!* All U.S. auto manufacturers already make flex fuel vehicles for sale overseas. Why aren't we already driving on natural gas or liquid propane?
- Transact with each other *beyond money*. Barter, time bank, help each other, create new ways of doing/making things, and respect each other and all living things.
- Explore your own feelings of shattered trust as the crisis of 2008-2009 continues. Set your financial goals and plans for achieving them, but find ways to engage in your financial life that support your dreams and don't depend on greed or usury to succeed.
- Be willing to think outside the box, to find new ways of operating. For example, the U.S. Postal Service is struggling to make ends meet. How might they do business differently? Here's a few ways: allow people to choose to have the hardcopy of any

letter scanned and sent to an email address rather than hand-delivered, let people turn photos into postcards or even stamps, offer a service that texts or emails a numerical code that you can apply to any envelope in lieu of a stamp.

- Give any tax breaks only to small businesses. Encourage local industry, business and community, not global. Break up large agricultural entities and allow small farmers entry into the land market. Remove parking lots and restore land to agricultural production even in the inner cities. Plant a garden in your front yard, or on your roof.
- Oppose the globalization of the world's resources as commodities. Water cannot and should not belong to a company; it belongs to Nature and is only used or borrowed by living things.
- Explore cooperative living; rebuild the natural extended family after the nuclear family experiment. Try sharing: the work and produce of the garden, childcare, and cars. Discover how a resource shared is a cost halved.
- Ensure availability of sex education and inexpensive (or *free*) supplies for birth control and safe sex worldwide.

- Support organizations that provide clean water in areas that have none.
- Trust the urge to do something new, something different. It may bring you a new or deeper understanding of yourself and of reality.
- Lead the way on nuclear disarmament. Unilaterally disarm, and stop all new weapons development programs. Encourage others to do the same. Work for greater transparency in our own programs as well as those of others.
- Stop US companies from manufacturing chemicals and pesticides that are known to be toxic, and new ones that haven't even been tested. It is no more ethical to make and ship known toxins overseas for consumption than it is to continue to market products locally that are known to be unsafe. Force all corporations to put human life ahead of profits.
- Increase education about the issues of human trafficking. Americans don't believe it happens in their own neighborhood, but it does. A shelter for child prostitutes opened in 1979 in Los Angeles, and by 2008 it had helped more than 10,000 children. Increase enforcement of anti-trafficking laws. Increase punishment

of offenders. Pay attention to what's happening in your own neighborhood.

- Support organizations that assist refugees. Volunteer time for fund raising, if you are unable to work directly with those in need.
- Lobby your lawmakers to end any kind of torture. Increase the education and psychological support programs for our military personnel, both during active duty and post-discharge.
- Make environmental issues a key factor in every purchase you make, especially homes and vehicles. Buy only as much as you need, and consider the future costs of operation and maintenance, as well as the pollution your purchase will cause. Find ways to share. **Choose wisely and sustainably.**
- Find a way to use less oil in your own life. Bike to work, walk to the corner market. Wear a sweater instead of turning up the heat. Take your own cloth bag to the store, instead of using their plastic bags. Turn off (don't put into standby mode) appliances, including TVs and computers, when not in use. Unplug 'wall rats' (the power transformers for most electronic equipment) when not in use.

- Examine your diet for ways to limit the consumption of meat. The less meat we eat, the more food we have for all. Cows are the greatest source of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and today, although not their natural diet, they are fed massive amounts of grain (which may require use of fertilizer and pesticides) that could otherwise be used as food for humans.
- Whenever possible, shop at a local farmer's market so that your purchases don't need to be transported hundreds or thousands of miles from farm to store.
- Become involved in education, both your own and that of your children. Be a role model for your child. Volunteer in your child's classroom. Take a class at your local community college or university. Never stop learning.
- Learn and teach sound financial practices. Question every purchase as to need and environmental appropriateness. Make a budget that ensures saving, and stick with the plan.
- End fractional reserve banking; require banks to hold 100% reserves.
- Take ownership of your own finances. Be certain you understand the ramifications of any credit you accept, don't accept terms you are not

positive you can meet. Don't look to the government to bail you out if things don't turn out like you had planned.

- Support the foundation of a 'green-helmet brigade' within the United Nations, similar to their peacekeeping forces but dedicated to enforcing environmental laws. The unit would pro-actively enforce laws anywhere in the world.
- Limit viewing media, whether TV, movies, or Internet. Get out of the house and walk, talk with neighbors, or garden. Touch the Earth.
- Search your religious beliefs for those that speak to inclusion. Demonstrate your beliefs in everything you do or say.
- Discuss your vision of the future with family, friends and neighbors. Network. Get the word out.
- Recognize when God (or Spirit, or The One) provides what you need; food, money, connection with others, solace, and love. **Return the favor.**
- Each morning, during your bathroom ritual, find one toxic idea, act, word, habit, attitude or addiction that you can let go of today. Then let it go.
- Find a charity you can support, and give generously. Find a need in your neighborhood; a weekly shift at the

food bank, driving meals to seniors who cannot get out themselves, collecting jackets and blankets for the homeless, or sorting books for sale at your library, donating blood, and give of your time and energy.

- Support groups like “Nonviolent Peaceforce”, groups that are dedicated to non-violent solutions to war. These teams of trained, unarmed peacekeepers immerse themselves in local society and network to build trust. They may be able to negotiate where others have failed, and they may be called upon to function as 'human shields' to prevent bloodshed. Often, just opening lines of communication between warring parties is sufficient to get that dialogue started and end the conflict.
- Give to another every single day, even if it is just allowing them to go ahead of you in line, or offering to run an errand for someone who is short on time.
- Participate in the Revolution that is happening around the world today. Hundreds of years ago, a revolution in thinking led to the understanding that the Earth is round and orbits the Sun. Today a revolution just as profound is teaching us that we are all united in our consciousness, that we are all manifestations of God. Join in!

- Make generic drugs available in poor countries for cost only (or for *free*), especially for HIV/AIDS and malaria.
- Retrofit urban areas with mixed-use housing, parks and other public spaces and pedestrian paths to encourage residents to remain local for work and shopping. End long commutes that waste time and energy, and consume large amounts of fuel, by fostering local community and encouraging local investment. Start a local bike-share program, to provide energy efficient, green, intra-urban transportation.
- Stop privatizing water supplies. In Bolivia, the eighth poorest country on Earth, the poor pay more for water (1/4 of the average monthly budget) than a person in San Francisco.
- End the focus on this week's profits, on the 'street estimate' and refocus on long-term goals and results. Stop allowing the institutions that make the money make the rules. End day trading and speculation in stock and commodities markets.
- *Always* question advertising, especially by petroleum companies who tout how 'green' they are. Ignore all advertising whenever possible.
- The United States sells more weapons than any other nation. WE must stop

the warmongering. For every US\$1 spent by the United Nations, US\$2000 is spent worldwide to make war. Reverse these figures.

- Make micro loans in third world countries with the money you would otherwise use for gifting at Christmas. Give handmade cards or handwritten notes to all explaining what you have done, and offer regular updates on what your gift is accomplishing.
- Retire coal-fired power generation plants; there is no such thing as 'clean coal'.
- Protect wildlife migration corridors.
- Put controls on all cars that limit the top speed to 55 mph. This speed saves lives and gas proportionately more than any other proposed limit. Adjust to (and enjoy!) the slower lifestyle this engenders.
- Prevent runoff of pesticides and fertilizers into rivers, lakes and oceans. Over 20% of the Earth's oceans are now 'dead zones', depleted of oxygen and life due to this type of pollution.
- Educate yourself on the issues that matter to you. Then get fierce about them.
- Practice cooperation and compassion in your daily life. Work together. Help one another.

- Restore the protections afforded us by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Sometimes we accept restrictions to these principles, via the Patriot Act for example, in order to protect ourselves only to discover that the restrictions themselves take away our liberty.
- Get past the illusion that we are separate; separate from each other, separate from Nature, separate from God.
- In 2008, several 'Ponzi Schemes' were exposed in the US, one involving US\$50 billion according to press reports. Later investigation showed that regulations already existing were not enforced. Simultaneously, several Chinese government officials were jailed for using public money for gambling in casinos. Bottom line: regulations can be put into place, yet they may not stop greed. We must find a way to curb greed, understanding that simply more regulation is not the answer.
- Be like Nature: recycle *everything*.
- Accept that it is not justice when 20% of the world's population uses 80% of the Earth's resources, or when 10% of the population controls 90% of the Earth's wealth. Work to change these disparities.

- End unemployment and pay a living wage to all who work to eliminate our dependence on foreign oil by retrofitting buildings with solar power and insulation, growing food, or manufacturing alternative energy sources.
- Whether it is wealth, security, pleasure or power, remember that too much of anything is not good.
- Practice the Golden Rule.
- Move beyond simple 'faith' and place Jesus and Buddha into the culture in which they lived. Begin to understand what they were saying as it related to their time, not necessarily today. There was no such thing as science, the earth was flat and the center of the Universe, medicine consisted of some herbs and possibly bleeding to remove evil spirits, literacy was rare. They each offered something extraordinary, a glimpse of how man could relate to Spirit and each other, how compassion, love and inclusion are the foundations of our experience. Live their teachings.
- Re-imagine the world; don't just apply band-aids.
- Lobby legislators to end all pollution.
- Fight corporate-advantaged trade policies.

- Find the 'teachable moment' and use your experience to teach another.
- Recognize that you only borrow land from your descendants. You do not 'own' your land. It will still be here centuries after you have passed on (even if it is underwater!). Rethink home ownership, both as to how it relates to your finances and to your retirement plans. Consider living in communal situations or as extended families. Move society towards taking better care of our elderly, providing both assisted living and hospice care for those in need.
- Occasionally recall that American Indians were here before Europeans, and that they are called “Indians” only because Columbus had no clue as to where he was on any of his voyages. Remember how they were treated in order to provide you with the country you praise today. Got land? Thank an Indian.
- Green the inner cities.
- Educate our children about the environment and their place in it.
- Care for others.
- Prepare food, and then share it with others.
- Reform political campaign contribution laws: no company can spend a dime to influence laws, either

through lobbyists, advertising, or campaign contributions. Vote for a Congress that puts humanity first, not companies.

- Foster an intention in your life that is deep and unswerving.
- Encourage worldwide environmental regulations and curbs on chemical production.
- Improve education for all in the fields of science and finances.
- Conserve water.
- Learn a foreign language.
- Shut down every escalator and leaf blower in the world. Need I say more?
- Understand where your food and water come from, the economic, environmental and political impact of your home and your car, and the impact of efforts taken by others around the world in order to support your lifestyle.
- Recognize that the pursuit of oil by Western corporations engenders contaminated soil, toxic waste pits, contaminated rivers and seas, air pollution, illegal logging, expropriation of land, rampant violation of American health and safety standards, disease, crime and human rights violations that impoverish millions and lead to refugee populations (with the

accompanying destruction of indigenous cultures and lifestyles).

- Eliminate the ability of free trade agreements to implement policies created in secret corporate meetings. Increase transparency and improve access to the negotiations for the local population.
- Understand that while people generally support green lifestyles, we must all get past choosing the cheaper product over the green product.
- Celebrate and embrace matriarchal values: day care, medical care, equal pay protection, housing for all, networking (building relationship), and understanding our emotional life, not just our mental one.
- Restore our ability to use trade restrictions to drive environmental, consumer and worker protections. Understand that the free trade premise, that the wealthier a country is the better able it is to protect its citizens and our environment, is a lie.
- Reform the prison system. Why do we insist on wasting all of this human capital? Our greatest resource, our imagination, is being limited by our treatment of prisoners, especially those convicted of non-violent crimes. Educate and rehabilitate, treat them like human beings, not animals to be

locked away and forgotten. Treat drug use/abuse as a medical or psychological issue, not a criminal one.

- Limit the rights and powers of corporations to be less than the rights and powers of people. Make the rights of Nature dominant over both.
- Become aware of the brutality, slavery and colonial exploitation that went into making your food, clothing and home appliances (among other goods you consume).
- Stop focusing on 'lack' and concentrate on abundance instead. See the good around you, the love, and give to others just as you receive.
- Encourage that which enhances life yet can't be valued in dollars. Move our focus from GDP to a measurement tool that focuses on what we all want: a more caring and just society, neighbors helping neighbors, schools, churches, temples, art, choirs, parks, poetry, commitment, dance, music, long walks on the shore, health, enough (not just *more*), sunsets and sunrises.
- Communicate, network, discuss, and in all ways, spread the word
- Pay attention to someone, give of your time, or perform acts of kindness rather than buying goods as gifts

- Shop at a local farmer's market, or on a local farm. Better yet, volunteer at the community garden. Even better, network all the gardeners on your street, to share crops and create a plan that ensures a variety of produce
- Contact businesses to ask that packaging be eco-friendly and much reduced, and to get off their mailing lists to limit the use of resources for printing and mailing catalogs.
- End the waste of human capital by ensuring that anyone who can work has the opportunity, even if that means we have to go back to farming
- Buy only organic food, even when it is more expensive, from sources you trust
- Lobby politicians to provide us with true security, not wars half way around the world or on every continent. Identify the causes of war and address those issues, rather than attempting to eliminate those who disagree with us
- Stop buying fluids in plastic containers
- Return corporations to their rightful place, in line behind humans and behind Nature, working *for us* not using us as tools or slaves
- Decide as a society that the benefits of a healthy population outweigh the

right of private business to profit from illness. Universal health care can be affordable, comprehensive and functional if we want it to be that way

- Remove dams before they crumble anyway
- Make a plan to redistribute land now owned by large industrial farming conglomerates so that small farmers can begin to organically farm and restore the vitality of our soil
- Break up companies that are *too big to manage* as well as those that are *too big to fail*
- Stop mountaintop removal as a cost-effective mining technique by including clean-up and restoration costs in the price of the product being mined
- Don't fall for cap-and-trade, a method of continuing the current pollution-based paradigm. Tax carbon at its source, to provide funds for clean-up and mitigation of its aftereffects, and to make other sources of energy cost-effective.
- Investigate why placebos have such stunning success, while simultaneously questioning the studies that prove other expensive medications supposedly work
- Expand Farm Aid to encourage city-dwellers to return to farming

- Close waste incinerators
- Improve scientific literacy so that our children are not as gullible as we are to the quick, ignorant sound bite
- Question the “need” that our media feels to present both sides of every issue, when one side is clearly uneducated or flat out wrong. Don’t legitimize ignorance in the name of political correctness. When you have cancer, do you go to a pediatrician? No, you go to someone who has made the study of cancer his or her life’s work, an oncologist. Do you take at face value the statements of *anyone* debunking climate change, or do you instead ask a climatologist? Similarly, don’t feel it is important to hear the slave owner’s point of view.
- Hold corporations accountable for harmful decision making, up to and including criminal prosecutions or dissolution
- Enforce the environmental laws already on the books, particularly those that focus on providing us with clean air and water
- Celebrate diversity, preserve disparate languages and cultures and traditions, encourage young people to learn about the ancestors and to celebrate the myriad of ways in which life can be ecstatically lived

- Realize that any agreement that provides for “free trade” would be one sentence long. The pacts we now call “Free Trade Agreements” are anything but free, and often so one-sided in favor of large corporations as to be anything but an *agreement*.
- Get our children out into Nature so that they begin a lifelong relationship and understand how life works on this planet
- Do meaningful work. Change jobs if what you are doing now conflicts with your innermost, fundamental values
- Cap the maximum wage, as the Civil Service and military already do, so that no one makes more than 20 times the minimum wage
- End the production and use of chemicals, pesticides, and herbicides, especially in conjunction with growing our food.
- Encourage all nations to adopt worker protections and environmental safety laws. Pollution and climate change know no boundaries
- Improve education about finance in primary school
- Notice coincidences in your life
- Conserve water and energy.
- Recognize the impacts on others around the world that contribute to

your ability to buy cheap goods from the local big box retailer

- Increase transparency in government and business; draw back the veil on information and decision making
- Become aware of the brutality, slavery and colonial exploitation that went into: making your clothing, making your home appliances, drilling and refining the oil in your car, and into growing the food you eat
- Open to every person, every situation that you encounter. Experience every aspect, every flavor, every texture, as if for the first time, with wonder and awe and amazement.
- Volunteer with community or neighborhood groups that are working to solve the problems that concern you the most: housing, food, jobs, social justice, ecological protection or restoration
- Explore this thought experiment: How would you change your life if gas for your auto touches \$6 per gallon? Are these changes you can begin to incorporate into your lifestyle today? This has the benefit of preparing you for a day fast approaching, and will delay that day from coming quickly, through your own conservation measures. But would you rather be ready and accustomed to the new

lifestyle, or wait for events to slap you up side your head?

- Talk with your more elderly family members, about what skills they learned as children and young adults that they haven't used (due to technology) in recent years. Ask them to demonstrate them so that you can learn them before these skills are lost.
- Recognize that individual survival techniques won't get us through the coming transition; we need to work to make each neighborhood and community resilient and sustainable
- Even if you disagree with single payer health insurance, support making *all* health insurance "not-for-profit". Change the motivation for providing insurance, and that changes the willingness to pay claims
- Eliminate the Electoral College. Making every vote count, the person with the most votes for President wins, will encourage candidates to speak to all people, not just the handful of counties that pollsters predict will swing an entire state to one candidate or another
- Rethink the need to produce vehicles that hold ten but get used by one or two
- Address the poor state of education in America. Open schools 12 or 14 hours

a day, so that students can study in a supportive, safe environment. Ensure that all children have the nutrition and medical support they need. Get past the school-year calendar that worked when farming dominated our lives and children had to work summers on the family farm by engaging students year-round, or else utilize the summer vacation to actually begin to farm locally and get students involved in providing their own food. Put the focus on graduation rates, from high school and from college, not on enrollment rates.

- ***Above all, be grateful for everything you receive. Live in continuous, great fullness.***

Please join me in creating a new vision that includes everyone in dialogue to solve our problems, lets every spirit flourish, and fills every soul with joy.

Speak Freely

Our challenge today is defining and implementing a strategy, a lifestyle, which ameliorates the problems inherent in the domination and exploitation of our current society without throwing us back into the tyranny of *purely local* economics. Just two hundred years ago, before global trade was cheaply available at the supermarket around the corner, life was brutal. Men toiled in their barns and fields from sun-up past sun-down, while the women knelt at grindstones to turn small portions of last year's wheat or barley harvest into a starchy meal mainstay. If the rains never came, or came too frequently, the family had no money to purchase replacement crops from other regions that might have had a bumper crop that year. If something went seriously wrong with dinner, there was no way they could dial the nearby pizza parlor and request delivery. And in the end, no matter the weather or other circumstances, the taxes were always due and payable. Certainly, no one wants to return to those days of stunted growth, early death, and ceaseless toil.

But at the same time, can we call out the current paradigm for its faults? Can we ask that corporations respect the workers they need to turn out products, and to generate products that are healthy and sustainable?

Can we ask that governments encourage creativity and choice, and protect and enhance those aspects of life that we all share, without impoverishing us with taxes? Can we ask that our military protect us, without dominating and exploiting our neighbors? Can we acknowledge that mankind is but one species among untold thousands? Can we begin to demonstrate that we are not intent on destroying our ability to live on Earth?

Can we learn to use the gains of industrial society, improvements that have enabled us to grow in stature as well as comfort, but to use them in ways that support life and ecology, rather than destroying our ecosystems? Can we assert our right to eat real food, not food products that are mere ghosts of the nutrition and flavor we used to enjoy? Can we use industrialized processes in small and local ways to ease the burden of feeding ourselves several times a day, without becoming slaves to the machinery? Can we eliminate the ‘food deserts’: the towns and small communities in America that lack even one market selling fresh, wholesome food⁵⁹? Can we admit we would rather stay in power individually even as that

⁵⁹ In 2009, over 23 million Americans, including nearly 7 million children, do not have a market within 1 mile of their home. Many of them must drive more than 10 miles to find fresh food, especially fruits and vegetables. Instead, they rely upon cheap, incomplete nutrition from restaurants and frozen food products.

power erodes, than to do what it takes to grow in power as a community? Can we act differently, having seen this truth about ourselves?

It is only in the doings of our culture that we see our true selves. We can talk about justice and equality and reverence, but unless we act in ways that are congruent with our talk, we might as well not speak at all. What does the manner in which you spend your money say about your values? Do you continue to support sweatshops overseas by shopping in stores that hide their outsourcing of production? Do you feed dollars into your neighborhood Wal-Marts and fast food chains, establishments that ensure a market for their cheap, degraded products by paying a less-than-living wage to their employees? Do you vote for politicians who endorse spending requests to send our military into nearly 150 countries around the world, playing global policeman, without yet providing us any true security? Have you figured out how to have a happy life without your house appreciating thousands of dollars each year?

To achieve justice, we will undertake change that might be seen as sacrifice, or that might be hidden by fear. We may have to pay more, avoid products that foster injustice through slave labor or pricing inequalities, limit our consumption to prevent exploitation of others, listen to

people who have different views and have had different life experiences, or accept smaller returns on our investments. We will rise above our fear of change by becoming willing to do what is right for all, even if our actions increase our own, personal cost. Can we ask not, “What are my rights?” but rather, “What are my responsibilities?” Can even the poor ask, “What is mine to give to someone else?”

We will only survive by crafting a vision that includes everyone. Deciding how we want to *be* in this new Millennium requires that we enter into dialogue, and that we listen when others speak about the dreams and visions they hold in their heart. Invite your grandchildren into the conversation: what do they say is important to them? What do they ask of you, now, in this critical time? What do you want to be able to tell them you accomplished, when you speak again in ten years? And, what would you give up, if you knew you could make a difference? Please take up this challenge: to begin having meaningful conversations, to go deep into your own heart and reveal the love that arises there, bubbling out at every opportunity. Speak freely, but even more important, listen deeply. Give your word, make a public vow, take a stand, and ask your friends and family for help and to hold you accountable.

A survivable, sustainable future lies not in continuing to relegate most people to second-class status. It is only by stepping away from a paradigm of domination and exploitation, of manufacturing differences in order to demonize the other, of living in fear of lack, that we begin to craft a world that is welcoming and supporting and worthy of our true nature as manifestations of the Divine. It is only when we recognize and act on the understanding that we are all equal that we begin to offer liberty and justice for all. It is time to praise mankind above corporations, to celebrate our diversity even as we recognize our common Source, to value the Earth and Nature as much as we have valued the charade of money. Your neighbors are your friends, and they are not going away unless you kill them. Please choose the decent path.

Appendix A

Here are more statistics and resources about racism in America today, compiled by Dr. Gregory Mengel:

Housing Disparities

- Blacks denied available housing 35-75% of the time (Bonilla-Silva, 2001)
- Blacks and Hispanics discriminated against in 1/2 of their house hunting efforts (Ibid.)
- Black applicants are denied mortgages twice as frequently as whites with same qualifications (Ibid.)

Criminal Justice

- Half of those killed by police are black – 76% unarmed (Ibid.)
- Black people 4 times more likely to be arrested for drugs (Lipsitz, 1998)
- Black people incarcerated at 6 1/2 times the rate of whites (Justice, 2010).
- Black people comprise 40% of the American prison population, Latinos 20% (Ibid.).

Wealth and Income

- Black people have 10 cents of net worth for every dollar of white net worth, and Latinos have 12 cents of net worth for every dollar of white net worth (Dillahunt, Miller, Prokosch, Huezo, & Muhammad, 2010).

- White men with college degrees earn 1/3 more than similar black men (Wise, 2009).
- Black and Latino families 2 1/2 to 3 times more likely to be below poverty line (Ibid.)

Employment

- Job applicants with white sounding names 50% more likely to be called for an interview than those with black sounding names despite identical qualifications and experience (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004).
- As of December 2009, 16.2% of African Americans and 12.9% of Latinos are unemployed, compared to 9% of whites (Dillahunt et al., 2010).
- Between 2007 & 2009 the national unemployment rate for Native Americans jumped from 7.5% to 15.2% (Austin, 2010).

An incomplete bibliography regarding white privilege:

Austin, A. (2010). *Different Race, Different Recession: American Indian Unemployment in 2010*. Retrieved June 6, 2011, from <http://www.epi.org/publications/entry/ib289>

Bertrand, M. & Mullainathan, S. (2004). *Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market*

- Discrimination*. Retrieved Oct 12, 2010, 2010, from <http://www.economics.harvard.edu/faculty/mullainathan/files/emilygreg.pdf>
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2001). *White supremacy and racism in the post-civil rights era*. Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner.
- Dillahunt, A., Miller, B., Prokosch, M., Huezo, J., & Muhammad, D. (2010). *State of the Dream 2010: DRAINED*. Retrieved Sept 28, 2010, from http://www.faireconomy.org/files/SoD_2010_Drained_Report.pdf
- Drinnon, R. (1997). *Facing West : the metaphysics of Indian-hating and empire-building*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Dudley, E. J. & Novak, M. E. (1973). *The wild man within; an image in Western thought from the Renaissance to romanticism*. [Pittsburgh]: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Eze, E. C. (1997). The Color of Reason: The Idea of "Race" in Kant's Anthropology. In E. C. Eze (Ed.), *Postcolonial African philosophy : a critical reader* (pp. 103-140). Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.
- Justice, U. S. D. o. (2010, June 2010). *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2009 – Statistical Tables*, from

<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/pim09st.pdf>

- Lipsitz, G. (1998). *The possessive investment in whiteness : how white people profit from identity politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mills, C. W. (1997). *The racial contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Roediger, D. R. (2007). *The wages of whiteness : race and the making of the American working class* (Rev. ed.). London ; New York: Verso.
- Roediger, D. R. (2008). *How race survived US history : from settlement and slavery to the Obama phenomenon*. London ; New York: Verso.
- Wise, T. J. (2009). *Between Barack and a hard place : racism and white denial in the age of Obama*. San Francisco: City Lights Books.