

We Are All On Flight
93:
Bringing Spirit to R Evolution

By Derek Joe Tennant



For my granddaughters, especially

Panjarat (Thailand)

and Dana (America)

*Thanks to Lora Zombie (www.lorazombie.com) for the painting on
the cover*

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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

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we used to know that
Nature is in control.
deep water, strong winds,
sweet berries in spring.
an always imperfect
butterfly.

when did you last see a bee?
a violet-green swallow in open woods?
a salamander calling its lover
to attend to their business?

how long since you touched
any life around you
not using silicon?
how long since you celebrated
any life around you
not blood related?
how long since you've been touched
by the love of a
many-splendored rose?

how long will you wait?



Introduction

On September 11, 2001, Flight 93 earned a place among the legends of America. According to the official story¹, hijackers took over the plane and as some of the passengers realized the peril they were in, they arose and struck back at their attackers. The flight ended over the Pennsylvania skies that morning, and whether you believe the official telling of the tale or not, one truth stands out: we celebrate those who face certain death with resistance and ingenuity rather than surrender.

We also see a common development of human character: asleep, awake to one problem, awake to many problems, awake to the interconnectedness of these problems, taking personal action to try to solve the problems, and finally, a realization that personal actions will never be enough, that something more is required of us. We look into the abyss of extinction, and know in our hearts that changing light bulbs and buying hybrid cars provide us no safe future. But should extinction be our biggest concern? Extinction happens. Nothing lasts forever, yet the Earth will survive whatever we do, even if we don't. This doesn't address the suffering between here and there; privilege enables our denial as we dodge the reality fast approaching rather than change our course. We say, "We'll find solutions: tech will provide, we are creative at heart." This belief in science is

¹ I personally do not believe the government's conspiracy theory, that 19 Arab hijackers flew planes into buildings because they hate our *freedom*. The official story of Flight 93 however, is iconic in many ways. I use it as a metaphor here in its mythic sense; not reflecting acceptance of the truth of it, but acknowledging that most Americans have imprinted this event in such a deep and profound way that it has changed our culture, for the worse.

fundamental, in many ways as much as any religion. It ignores the fact that every advance in technology brings with it some unintended consequences, often worse than the problem the tech is supposed to solve. Or we ignore what we know saying, "People can't handle the truth." Really, that means *I* can't handle the truth, and others are just like me. The truth breaks our heart, our grief is too much to bear, and so we look away.

Those of us who are awake experience the grief of profound loss; we viscerally empathize with a mother unable to feed her child and watching as her baby slowly starves to death, or with a dolphin trapped in a trawler's net. Yet when we rise out of our grief we come soon to realize that our only viable response lies in resistance and ingenuity. The dominant culture wants us to *hope* that our lives will continue to improve into the far-distant future; that the problems we face will be solved by some new technology, when we elect a new President, by stricter laws or better enforcement, or by new and improved, family-sized, industrial-strength plastic products. But if you realize that hope is what the abuser offers to his victim: "Hope this is the last time I have to beat you!" then you clearly see that hope is predicated upon your own inability to affect your future. Leaving a rally full of hope is just another reason to not do anything to affect the outcome you know is inevitable. Until you understand what really happened, it is appalling to think of those passengers on Flight 93. They had no hope. And yet, it was exactly this lack of hope that gave them their opportunity to make a difference, to change the outcome of their *hopeless* situation. They were in uncharted waters, facing an unprecedented situation that likely none of them had ever seriously contemplated: hurtling through space on a path that seemed destined to end abruptly and badly, for anyone hoping to live another day. The usual responses of

everyone on that plane that arose from our cultural *don't rock the boat* imperative would not, could not, work; new and novel responses were needed. How do we, as a culture and a society, embrace new and novel responses as our **collective destiny**, one that we have crafted through our choices and functional structures, fast approaches?

There are paths available that do not lead to mutually assured species extinction; but to see them you have to look for *disconfirming* evidence. Our egos, trained since birth to filter the data input our senses bring us with the goal of surviving to fight another day, defend our past and the choices made before we were even aware of what we faced; choices that have placed us firmly on the path we walk today. It is natural that our egos confirm our beliefs rather than challenge them; but when these same beliefs serve only to further our descent into madness and chaos, the only way out is to question them, challenge them, and often to rebel against them and change them. We are all addicted to being right and to being accepted. Our *facts* fit our beliefs. What if we test, rigorously, our assumptions? Can we identify our own confirmation bias; meaning, can we see how our subconscious and our ego filters the massive amounts of incoming sensory data, presenting for our viewing and decision-making pleasure, only what we want to know? And for those of us who revel in being on the fringe, does our *pride* in going against the majority also get in our way? Why are we such herd animals? Is it because we know deep inside that we are interconnected with one another; a human group mind, and not just seven billion islands of consciousness in the universal sea? Certainty of belief leads to blindness. We don't allow dissent, we don't recognize facts contrary to our beliefs, and we don't know what we don't know. We crave certainty almost as much as we crave a group that

validates our certainty. Can we go alone into uncertainty? What does openness look like? Is it living in the moment?

The media we have tasted our entire lives, the hopes and dreams planted in us by our parents and teachers, the way the system funnels us like cattle through a chute to the slaughterhouse, the way we have learned to self-censor, to self-guilt, and to self-police our thoughts and actions in the name of *being a good American*; all of these ways tell us there is no alternative to the way things are. We humans also tend to have short term memory issues, especially when it comes to remembering other ways of doing things, ways our forebears knew all too well. We buy our plastic-wrapped chicken parts at the nearby unit of a national grocery chain, and insist that our neighbor kill the young rooster in his backyard that makes *offensive* noises. When electricity was introduced to America in the early 1900s, most people had to be *sold on the idea* of using it. Today, many will say that life without electricity is life not worth living. How strange that we cannot remember life before, and that life before was satisfying in many, albeit different, ways. *We Are All On Flight 93* offers a chance to pursue the path offered by the Buddha more than 2,500 years ago; not Buddhism as his legacy has become, but rather one of his core teachings: test what you learn to see if it is valid. Take nothing on *faith*. Question *everything*; what your parents told you, what you hear on the news, what you read in this book, what the government tells you regarding any action they plan or take, what your lover whispers in your ear at night, *everything*. Especially doubt the stories you are telling yourself about how the world works and why. My goal for this book is to help in this process; to offer alternative views for your consideration, to take you to a 30,000 foot perspective where life seems much

different, as the passengers on Flight 93 so tragically discovered. When you are mired in the swamp and being chased by crocodiles, it is hard to remember that the ocean waves still caress the gently-sloping beach under the palm trees of a beautiful Caribbean island. When you get to a higher view, however, what jumps out at you is the myriad of cracks in the system, a system that always seems so solid when you are in it. There are cracks in our environment, our government, our economy, our military, our schools, our food, our cities, our families; everywhere you look, a crack is widening. How large can they become before our entire culture crumbles around us?

How do we lift the veil, confront the crisis by seeing it without the screen of propaganda? When the future is obscured, and no matter how effective we are in getting behind the lies used to control us it will never be completely clear, we often let our uncertainty freeze us into place. It may be out of fear of the unknown, it may be out of a desire to have a perfect plan before acting, it may often be from a desire to not *hurt* others by making them accept the reality they so desperately deny. First we need to be willing to think: to seek the truth that is apparent but hidden by information manipulation, corporate, political, and personal. Second we must be willing to feel: to connect with the world through our energy field and the emotions and feelings that energy generates and feeds. Third, we must be willing to speak: change the consciousness in which we live by emanating energy. And fourth, we need to be willing to act: for thought and feeling and expressing ideas brings us a clarity of purpose, and offers us a handle on what is real. But it takes action to truly bring the new into manifestation. Dr. King spoke of a four-step process differently: analysis, negotiation, self-purification, confrontation. But it is the same idea, just

in different words. What words are appropriate for our time and our culture, and what words ring true for you?

Please take this invitation to look at your life and our society with new eyes; try, as much as you can, to *wonder* how someone else could hold radically different beliefs than your own and yet think they are true. Is there a kernel, or an iota, of truth there that can justify their crazy views? It is a rare gift, to be able to test the views of someone you don't even like or trust, with a goal of understanding the underlying truth of the reality around you. And yet, without that ability to walk a mile in another's shoes, how can we ever hope to nourish our 100%, and to leave behind the dichotomies of this world that separate us into warring camps? We've been here before; the 99% rising up against the 1%, only to see a new and often worse 1% take the place of the old. Let us not repeat the history that has yet to bring us the life we deserve, the peace we are due, and the love we are entitled to feel and to give.

Foreword

I want to begin this new story with an old story and a confession. First the confession: with each passing day, I become less comfortable and more unhappy with this life in America. I am 58 years old, but have managed to spend more than three of those years living in Thailand. My displeasure with America is not because I prefer living overseas instead; as with any culture, there are both good and bad aspects that are easily apparent to an outsider who is open to learning new ways of seeing, new ways of thinking, and new ways of being. Rather it is because I have been able to free myself of the bubble of propaganda, to step out of the story of the American Dream, and when I come back I can see more easily the gradual decline that goes unnoticed to those who remain immersed in the narrative of America. I write this book out of love: love for you dear reader, as well as for our family of Life that inhabits this one wild and precious planet, Earth. This writing will also focus on stories, new and old; looking at the old story of who we are and how we came to be, and at possibilities for new stories that revise our sense of our place in the Universe. For truly it is the stories that we tell ourselves and one another that shape the world we inhabit.

The old story: a man was walking alongside a river one afternoon and saw a baby, flailing and screaming, floating on the current near the shore. He waded out into the cool water and managed to grab the child before it was carried away, and to bring him back to shore. As he stood there marveling at the idea of having fished a baby from the river, he was startled to hear another one crying. Looking up, again he saw a baby flailing in the current, and again he waded out to gather in the child and save it from drowning. When he next heard a third

child, again in the river, he knew he could no longer *just* fish the children from the water; instead, he needed to move upstream, around the bend, and discover why the children were getting caught in the current in the first place.

I am that guy, but it is not babies in the river that I find myself saving. It is the myriad of problems we face today, problems that you can name as easily as I; environmental pollution and climate change, economic inequality and scarcity, violence in our homes, our cities, and perpetrated in our name around the globe, the list could go on for pages. You might have found yourself, as I did for some time, alternating between feeling energized while researching a *new* problem that I had just discovered and feeling deep depression over my inability to define the *One Answer* that would make the problem go away. But like the man in the story above, saving babies one at a time is useful work, but solutions come when we look into the root of the problem, rather than just bandaging a wound and hoping things will be fine in the morning.

So here's the challenge of this work: **everything we have done to this point has not worked.** We have failed to slow down the dysfunction, to change direction, or even to agree we have a problem. Take climate change, for example. The story is that we need to limit the rise in temperature to 2°C. In private, most climate scientists aren't even thinking about 2°C. They are talking about a rise of 6 or 8 degrees, and what that will mean. To stop the rise at 2°C requires the end of the use of petroleum *in the next five years*. How likely is that? That would take a miracle! Of course, agreement is not required for change to occur; and if there is anything other than death that is assured about our life today it is that any issue we are concerned about will change. Are you ready to examine a different way of seeing the

world? Are you prepared to seek a new story that describes what is expected of members of our community, as we struggle to find happiness in the face of radical restructuring? Aren't you already hearing, in those quiet moments before you fall asleep, your heart speak of a world that you wish we had created; a world of loving and sharing and gifting and community, instead of this separate, individual, striving, competitive battlefield? The real question is this: are you ready to let go of everything you have been told about what is valuable and to seek instead, a miracle: a world that works for everyone?

A miracle is when something happens that was impossible in the old story, and it says to you loudly and clearly: "Your world is too small, your sense of what is possible is too narrow. Open to possibility; let *me* show you something that you don't dare think yourself." A miracle is when the light shines through the cracks of the shell that forms what you think is your world; it is a sign that your world is about to fall apart. How can we become aware of the opportunities for miracles to occur? Does just noticing synchronicities, or coincidences, help increase their frequency? If we are looking or praying for them, if notice them with gratefulness when they appear, does that make them happen more often, or just allow us to see them easier? Can you remember a time when you witnessed a miracle? I think we all can.

When everything we do fails to solve our problems, we eventually have to ask, "What new ideas can we think of? What new story can we tell?" The idea of *story* is very useful. We can control our reaction to a particular event or thought, even when we cannot control where that event or thought takes us. And we control our reaction through the story we create to explain, justify, or sometimes even obscure, what is really going on. There

is an organization called the New Israel Fund, whose membership includes both Israelis and Palestinians, and which raises money for a number of joint causes. As part of leadership facilitation, the members were asked to write their own short story describing the creation of the state of Israel. A Palestinian wrote a piece titled “The Disaster” and referred to Israel’s creation as a tragedy for the Palestinian people as they were pushed off their ancestral lands and became subjects in the Israeli empire. An Israeli’s story, titled “Independence”, described a very different perspective in which Israel marked the fulfillment of a destiny that also extended deep into history. What is important here is this: both stories are essentially true, but if your focus is on one or the other, you act very differently. It is when you can see both clearly that you can find the spaces that intersect, the ways in which both stories can contribute to a solution rather than endless conflict. This is a central theme of *We Are All On Flight 93*: finding new stories that take the best of what came before, and synthesizing a path that allows us to feel who and where we want to be. The new stories have to take numerous realities into account; the old stories we are currently manifesting are mostly inconsistent, ignorant, and/or false. We have brought into being a worldview that is deeply flawed in fundamental ways. It is helpful before we begin to create a new story that we explore many of these flaws. As you can see through this exploration, a new level of awareness, or consciousness, will be needed to blend the best of the old with new ways of being. We essentially will be revolting against the old because we will leave behind the roots that give this old story its power and control. Any effective new story will have to address some core concepts that we got wrong before.

In August 1986 my brother, who had been working as a river guide throughout Western America for many years,

received a permit to allow our family to float through the Grand Canyon. An 18-day trip, we had time to explore its many side canyons, stop when we felt the urge rather than stick to a timetable, and explode some aspects of my old worldview. Venturing deep into a canyon like this, resupply is problematic; we came prepared with food for the entire eighteen day voyage. However, that meant that fresh food only lasted barely half the trip; one of the profound lessons I learned was that ambiance makes a large difference in the taste of my food. Despite only having re-constituted or otherwise dried or packaged food for over a week, every meal was like heaven simply because of where we ate, and what we were doing to generate our appetite. Oh, and the amazing surroundings; the local ecosystems we passed through, changing with almost every bend in the river. And the walls of the canyon....which are at the core of the lessons from this raft adventure. The guidebook describes in great detail the age and the make-up of each different band of color of rock in the walls of the canyon. It might say for instance, "The pink layer is 1.534 million years old, a sandstone, and it is overlain with a yellow layer that is 1.478 million years old..." At one point, the guidebook points to a layer of black rock that rises a few dozen feet above the water, for several hundred yards, before disappearing from sight once again. This layer is more than two billion years old. In truth, each layer represents an ocean that came, deposited sand and other material, and then receded. When you start on flat land, watch the canyon walls slowly rise to be a mile high, traverse the remains of more than two billion years of planetary evolution, and return to the present day, you cannot help but be affected in profound ways. Time; what does it mean to talk about 13.7 billion years of change since the first days of our Universe? Change; how nothing stays forever, how the ocean disappears,

the remaining rocks are eroded somewhat, then they are covered with new water and rock, and then they are eroded by a river that exposes them again to the erosion of wind and sand and temperature. They say that the river cuts its bed one inch deeper every one hundred years. When you are a mile deep inside the canyon, you taste a profound flavor to this story of time, and it puts our lives of an inch-worth of erosion into a perspective that one does not get from television. Contrast this perspective with that of a butterfly: ask the butterfly resting on the branch of a 2,000-year old redwood tree if what it sits on is alive, and it will say, "*Of course not! I've seen it nearly every moment of my life and it hasn't grown at all!*" Our new story needs to include an understanding of time and how everything changes through its passage².

Thanks for continuing to read. Not every person will. It is uncomfortable to think that this world we have come to believe we are entitled to enjoy must go away. We were taught to celebrate science because it was explaining our world. We learned that atoms had a nucleus and looked like tiny solar systems, that bacteria caused disease and if you took the right medicine, then all would be cured. Our parents told us that if we worked

² Having just used the terms *million* and *billion*, it might be useful to explore what they mean. If you were to begin to count the seconds as they tick by, in less than 12 days you would count one million seconds. Do that again a thousand times, or more than 31 years, and you will have counted a billion seconds. Repeat another thousand times, or 31,000 years (five times recorded history!) and you have counted a trillion seconds. It is too easy to ignore the reality of the numbers we bandy about, especially when we haven't given much thought to the difference and have no real way to relate to a *trillion* of anything. After all it's really only a matter of a few more zeroes, right?

hard and saved our money, we could buy a house someday, and that would show the world that we were good responsible citizens while paving the road of our retirement with gold. We were taught to judge other people by the clothes they wear, the size of their home and whether they were owners or renters, their family background and where they came from, or their spiritual beliefs. Especially, we were told that there was not enough in this world and that for you to be safe and have security in your old age, you must work harder than most, gather assets and resources, and play by the rules.

Part of what makes creating a new story so difficult is that we must overcome our natural sense of betrayal, as these rules are shown to be dysfunctional, and as the promises and *benefits* we worked hard to qualify for disappear like smoke in the night air. Promises (*entitlements* like Social Security³, Medicare, low-cost housing, farm subsidies, or food stamps) only have value as long as people believe they will be fulfilled. Once it is clear that they cannot be kept, once the music stops and only one-in-a-hundred can plop down in the few available chairs, it will turn ugly. What will it mean to you when your retirement funds are *Cyprused*³; taken as a tax to help bail-out a bank's bond holders and stockholders? What if Social Security goes away, or inflation makes the monthly stipend even less inadequate for survival than it is today? What if all treasury and municipal bonds are just confiscated by the government without reimbursement, as happened in

³ I know that Social Security and Medicare have been *paid for* via employment taxes, and thus should not be considered *entitlements*. However, as the government has *borrowed* all of those taxes and relies upon current revenues to fund the payments required, when spending must be cut this becomes a moot point.

2013 in Poland? Could you manage to just *let it happen* without protest?

We have taken to heart the story that says that when we put money into a bank account, it remains our own and the bank is just safeguarding it for us. In truth, our deposit becomes a liability to the bank: on their balance sheet our funds become reserves which can then be lent to someone else, and the need to eventually repay us our money, which the bank no longer has, makes us a creditor of the bank. If the bank fails, we will have to stand in line, behind most other creditors, to get some piece of what few assets stand to be distributed. How will you cope with the anguish and sense of abandonment, as your individual self that struggled so hard to be good now feels abandoned and inadequate? Rather, what is the new story? How can we shape our world so that this issue fades away? What possibilities are there for taking care of one's self in old age, that don't rely upon this old story?

Another reason creating a new story is difficult is that there is no clear path from here to there. It is easy to paint a grim picture of where the old story will lead us; it is impossible to predict what the new story will be. Think of the butterfly: when the caterpillar is called to eat itself silly and crawl into a cocoon, it can't imagine that it would be possible to fly from flower to flower rather than crawl from stalk to stalk. The caterpillar, which we treat as a disgusting pest, must feel like it is dying as its cells dissolve into a soup of nutrients that will reorganize into a creature we find beautiful and love to see. The lesson here may well be that we don't need to have a plan, a blueprint, or a perfect story before we begin our transition. We need only listen to what we are called to do in the moment, to find ways to live in our compassion with our giving heart, and to choose relationship over stuff, always.

We Are All On Flight 93 is not about providing you hope that the future will be rosy and our problems will be solved. That would encourage you to sit back in your seat and allow the forces that have hijacked our culture to drive on faster and faster, even over the cliff of extinction. Nor is it going to map out your future, tell you the ten things you can do to save the planet, or even point to any one action as **the One** that you must do. Rather this book is about stripping away hope, laying bare the machinations that perpetuate injustice, dysfunction, and exploitation in our world today. This book aims to ignite in you the fire that the passengers of Flight 93 felt when they took the only action they could think of: storming the cockpit and attempting to take back the plane. We speak here of rebellion, my friends: driving a stake into the heart of this vampire economy and refusing any longer to let the dominant culture exploit our fear and isolation to keep us pacified and docile while it sucks the life out of each and every one of us. A revolution takes many shapes: keeping as little **money** in banks as possible and using cash whenever we can; ending your use of oil by buying nothing other than the bare necessities like food and heat; selling your car; heating water on your roof for your daily shower; trading garden produce with your neighbors; learning skills that can be bartered to get you through times of unemployment; talking with people and discovering they have the same concerns as you, and are just as eager to withdraw their energy and time from the beast that is trying to use us up and throw us away; teaching children at home rather in what we used to call **public** schools but now are becoming private schools whether we signed up for that kind of change or not. What revolution ***does not*** look like is shopping our way to sustainability and using electric cars, cloth bags, and curly light bulbs as our only **solutions**. This all may

sound a little too radical for your taste; monkey-wrenching, sabotage, even treason and sedition fit under this description of what is required to save us from ourselves. Yet it can be as simple as not denigrating or dismissing as foolish those who are called to extreme actions, or to begin to rebel in the tiniest of ways by building community while helping care for a neighbor who can no longer drive herself to a doctor's appointment. Anyone who is paying the least bit of attention knows that we are living far beyond the ability of Mother Earth to support us; to survive we have to live for the aspects of life that are important; family, love, contribution, belonging. We can't, and won't, be able to drive four blocks to market for just one item of plastic forever, so let's start to let that part go now. Let's live with love and compassion and find ways to be happy that don't involve money, for that too, will not be around much longer. Let's storm our civilization using creative actions and bring it back to human-sized before it is too late for life on our Mother Earth. Please join our resistance: work in your neighborhood to raise awareness, funds, comrades, and energy. Share your new story with us all. And keep striking back... it works!

Before We Start...

The issues of our day stem from basic, foundational, and systemic consequences that arise when we don't know or understand the full truth of a situation. It may be that we can't possibly know everything there is to know about how something works. It may be that we are being lied to by those who do know, in order to achieve short-term goals at the risk of long-term damage; the "by the time this blows up, I'll be gone and you'll be gone" syndrome prevalent in many companies today. It may just be that we were educated years or decades ago and what we were taught then is now outdated or insufficient. It may be that secrecy has been invoked in an attempt to hide what would otherwise be deemed immoral or unconstitutional behavior. It may be that no one knows for certain, and until we can *prove* beyond all doubt that the way we've always done things is wrong, we will never change. It may be that we are in *denial*, that we don't want to know the truth, because that would prevent us from continuing to live in a situation that is comfortable, *for now*. In 2013, individuals who had witnessed and suffered from US *surgical* drone strikes in Pakistan in August 2012 were invited to describe the effects of these war crimes before a Congressional ad hoc hearing. But let it not be a surprise, given that we are examining secrecy's need to keep information out of the public discourse, that certain legislators actively pushed the State Department to block the witnesses' lawyer and translator from entering the U.S., thereby blocking anyone from appearing with real testimony that might demonstrate the horror perpetrated upon human beings by military personnel manipulating the remote-killing machines we call drones. Ah, yes: "You shall know the truth and the

truth shall make you flee...” Allowing these crimes to be witnessed would disturb the comfortable, not comfort the disturbed. And of course that is the goal, is it not? In any case, for those of us who have awakened, it helps us to do everything we can to ensure we understand what it is that we are looking at⁴.

Denial can also manifest within ourselves as an inability to acknowledge our deepest thoughts and prayers. During the Philippine-American War⁵, Samuel Clemens (better known as *Mark Twain*) wrote a piece called “*The War Prayer*”. He was unable to get the piece published during his remaining 10 years of life. In it, he tells of a preacher exhorting his congregation to pray for the soldiers, and for their glory and all the usual rhetoric that surrounds supporting the militaristic juggernaut as we roll over other territories and peoples. During the sermon, another man approaches the pulpit and

⁴ *We Are All On Flight 93* examines the myths, lies, assumptions, and structures that are so dysfunctional they threaten to drive us into extinction. It focuses on the ideals, emotions, and ideas, rather than the myriad details and facts. If you want more facts, look into my previous writings on this topic: *What Color Is Your Sky* (2010), *America is Dead. Long Live America.* (2011), and *Unfuck Our Future* (2012); all are available as free PDF files at derekjoetennant.net

⁵ From the U.S. State Department’s Office of the Historian: “After its defeat in the Spanish-American War of 1898, Spain ceded its longstanding colony of the Philippines to the United States in the Treaty of Paris. On February 4, 1899, just two days before the U.S. Senate ratified the treaty, fighting broke out between American forces and Filipino nationalists led by Emilio Aguinaldo who sought independence rather than a change in colonial rulers. The ensuing Philippine-American War lasted three years and resulted in the death of over 4,200 American and over 20,000 Filipino combatants. As many as 200,000 Filipino civilians died from violence, famine, and disease.

explains that God has heard the *silent prayers* of the congregation. He will present what God has heard, he states, and following that the people will have to decide which prayer they want answered. We pick up the piece as the mysterious stranger offers what God has heard as the silent prayer:

“...O Lord our Father, our young patriots, idols of our hearts, go forth to battle – be Thou near them! With them – in spirit – we also go forth from the sweet peace of our beloved firesides to smite the foe. O Lord our God, help us tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste to their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sports of the sun flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it – for our sakes who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet! We ask it, in the spirit of love, of Him Who is the Source of Love, and Who is the ever-faithful refuge and friend of all that are sore beset and seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts. Amen.” [*After a pause.*] “Ye have prayed it; if ye still desire it, speak! The Messenger of the Most High waits.”

It was believed afterward that the man was a lunatic, because there was no sense in what he said.”

Can we begin to be responsible for our deepest thoughts, acknowledging what it is that we pray for? When will we end our denial, fully face reality, and own what we allow to happen in our name?

It may also be that we don't understand simple logic, and don't understand the essential nature of **time** and our place within it. We've used as much oil in the last twenty years as we did in the first 130, since 1860. Arguably, we have used half of what is recoverable; meaning we've used a quarter of all the oil we ever will *just in the last two decades*. But that means that at the same rate as the last twenty years, we will be out in another forty, or barely 200 years altogether. If we manage to stretch that by using less (a scenario still unthinkable today by those in power), or recover more, and make oil last 300 years, that still is merely *the blink of an eye in human history*. And there's only a few years left in that eye blink, no matter how it ultimately turns out. Why are we not more interested in figuring out the next stage that is sure to follow?

Warnings about collapse always come from the fringe; the majority of people defer to authority. This it takes a breakdown to bring about a change of course. Sadly, too many people feel that it is better to be wrong and in the majority, than to be right and among the few. The easiest excuse is, “Even the experts didn't see this coming”; the easiest decision is the same decision we've **always** made. This is the crux of the matter: how, and when, do we make changes in the structure of our existence? If the system is corrupt and immoral, do we wait for it to fall or do we build a new system alongside the old, hopeful that one will supersede the other? The answer that Nature provides is that crisis is required in

order for evolution to occur. That crisis may be foreseen or not; momentum still has a way of preventing us from steering around the upcoming obstacles. This is what keeps me awake at night: inertia gets in my way, prevents me from making conscious changes that redirect energy into systems of power that are sustainable and equitable. I benefit from the corrupt practices, from the exploitation that is foundational to this way of life, and thus I am loath to change what appears to be working, until it no longer works.

I imagine that we are alike in this regard. Even if you want to avoid GMO foods, to avoid using oil and its byproducts, and to act in generous, compassionate ways to all who live around you, withdrawal from the culture is impossible. Yes you could *return to the land*, relying only upon what you can grow or gather or cobble together or hack, but we no longer benefit from the wisdom of how to live in that manner, knowledge that used to be passed from parent to child as a matter of course. I could no more live off the land today without access to tools and abundant energy than I could fly to the Moon.

The introduction looked at this from an emotional perspective; I feel in my heart that inaction is unacceptable, that patience will only increase our suffering, and that remaining silent is only being complicit in the immorality that is ever-increasing in our culture. Here I am trying to be more rational, to look at what might arise if logic is our only guide. Our science, while not crystal clear, is at least defining certain conclusions. The atmosphere is becoming unstable. The oceans are warming. The arctic ice cap is melting. The growth paradigm that underlies our global economy will eventually run out of planet to plunder. A culture founded on genocide will not willingly abandon violence as its primary tool for problem solving. Although the

guiding principle of business is profit, profit alone will not bring us peace. Profit is not a *law of nature*, nor is it a requirement of capitalism that forces companies to pay their employees as little as possible in order to boost profits. These are *choices*. These are also moral defects.

Note what Michael Ruppert said in 2011 about the principle of infinite growth, a requirement for capitalism and our modern, oil-based life and economy:

“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, **that infinite growth is possible**. It asks you NOT to comprehend what it means when the IEA tells us that instead of 76 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 consumption⁶. 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

⁶ Over the last 30 years, economic growth has averaged 3.6% and average debt growth has averaged 8% per year. To pay off the debt, those figures would have to be reversed; once again, we see that even if we manage to keep our current lifestyle, the next thirty years cannot be the same as the last thirty.

modified animals and clones is healthy. Our religion, our old religion, asks you to believe that fracking 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 that⁷.) 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 not 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 not 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 public and private are being looted as governments rush to find the cash to cover previous crimes 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

⁷ And they are all still sick and dying (2013)

believe that nuclear containment vessels cannot possibly be compromised. It asks you to pretend 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 year⁸. 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

⁸ By the end of the year, the number had risen to 12.

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 system is collapsing and that nationalism and ethnocentrism, racism and bigotry are 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 tens of 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 duration⁹. 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

⁹ By the time Hurricane Sandy kept more than a million New Jersey residents power-free *for two weeks* that marked the *third time in fourteen months* that had been a fact there. The two previous episodes were because of heavy snowstorms.

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, whereas 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 the direct cost of the murder of innocent life or, 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 crisis 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 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.**”

There is a fact that our modern world tries desperately to hide: we human beings are in **grave danger**. It is a trouble that is both common to all of life, and yet unremembered in our own collective consciousness. It is a trouble that is arising in Nature, and yet we are the cause of it. We have unleashed changes that we may be unable to cope with, to adapt to, or to mitigate enough to ensure our survival as a race. We are stripping the land and waters of its life and we are fouling our nest so much that it is beginning to kill us. The fact that our culture denies anything is wrong makes it even more difficult to see what is happening, or to plot a different course. And though many have awakened, despite the programming and distractions pushed upon us by society, some amount of harm is now unavoidable. Every day that passes, when we fail to change our actions and our consciousness, we lose precious resources, precious allies, and precious time. Our hole becomes deeper with every mile we drive, every tomato we eat that was grown in South America, every battery we recharge using power from a coal-fired power plant. Every moment we fail to act increases the harm we must someday heal, and dooms more fellow humans to death by disease or disaster, if not by hunger or thirst. This is the reality of our predicament; and we will not be able to deny it forever. The only real questions now are, why am I here? What am I to do to help?

Let me tell you who I am. **I am a human being.** I am not the work that I do, the car that I drive, nor the electronic digits in my *bank account*. I am not the school that taught me, the clothes I wear, or the last time I was on TV. You are a human being, too; not all of the ways you typically describe yourself. What was always important, before the advent of machines and oil and money, was how humans were in and of the world. We are human **beings**, not human **doings**, because that clarifies our purpose here: to experience and to relate to all of life within the Web that is our Earth. Being human is good. We can't *be* however, if we are focused on control or a particular outcome; if we are judging *good* or *bad* and trying to gain one over the other at the expense of *experiencing*. Here's Chögyam Trungpa describing the *being* part of our nature:

“Every human being has a **basic nature of goodness**, which is undiluted and unconfused. That goodness contains tremendous gentleness and appreciation. As human beings, we can make love. We can stroke someone with a gentle touch; we can kiss someone with gentle understanding. We can appreciate beauty. We can appreciate the best of this world. We can appreciate its vividness: the yellowness of yellow, the redness of red, the greenness of green, the purpleness of purple. Our experience is real. When yellow is yellow, can we say it is red, if we don't like the yellowness of it? That would be contradicting reality. When we have sunshine, can we reject it and say that sunshine is terrible? Can we really say that? When we have brilliant sunshine or wonderful snowfall, we appreciate it. And when we appreciate reality, it can actually work on us. We may have to get up in the morning after only

a few hours' sleep, but if we look out the window and see the sun shining, it can cheer us up.”

Too often we fear touching who we truly are at our core; **we fear being human**. We wrap ourselves in a cocoon of things to shelter us from having to confront our true nature, and we call this *real*. But this is the contradiction of our time: our culture is built around money, and the claim that we can *own* everything we need by using money to purchase it. Yet we can't *own* experience; and if that is our ultimate purpose, then money is just a distraction that keeps us from our true reason for being here.

Today we are missing three things: a coherent understanding of the root problems of our society and way of life, not the symptoms but the actual causes of our dysfunction; a coherent narrative or path that will lead to a better way of life; and the sense of empowerment that gives us the energy and motivation to actually change our life, change our point of view, and to exist with our world by manifesting a different, ***fundamentally functional*** existence. We will not be led to change by the mainstream media, nor will leaders step up to the podium and enact the laws this shift would require to be legislated into existence. The old way of business and politics is not about to go quietly, if at all. Rather we need to understand how we got to this point in our evolution, identify what we need to learn to be able to live differently, and then begin to manifest that new lifestyle without waiting for someone to wave a wand and make the new ways real.

If we refuse to accept the story told by business, government, and the mainstream media, what remains? There are alternatives, other ways to live, other means of support, other beliefs and actions that can leave us at peace and able to use our gifts to help others. How do we connect with them? Where do we find them? And

ultimately, when we do begin to act upon those alternative views, we will be called rebels and traitors. Depending upon how quietly we live, we may also be called terrorists. Anytime you issue a statement using words, you are free to define the words as you see fit; this is the essence of propaganda. But the bottom line here is that rebellion, active or passive, will not be taken lightly. Anyone who values life over property, truth over lies, and compassion over exploitation, will be branded and hunted down. It is only in community where we can find the support we need to make these difficult decisions, to take these seemingly impossible steps towards a brighter future, to shake off the bonds that hold us tightly to the body of the Empire.

I trust that you have enough statistics, data-points, and graphs to understand that we have big problems. *We Are All On Flight 93* treats those issues as symptoms, not causes. What is causing us to talk about extinction? What makes us worry that our government is out of control? What makes us so sure that climate change is caused by carbon dioxide, and what if we are wrong? And most importantly, what new stories can we tell that explain our world, where we came from, and our role in shaping it for future generations?

Likely, and I am not trying to prejudice or *create* this as our future, but likely it will be ugly. Change will come; and it will be a deep, wrenching, intense change that will last decades. It is impossible to predict what our physical, emotional, spiritual¹⁰, psychological, political,

¹⁰ Throughout *We Are All On Flight 93* I will reference *spirituality*. To be clear, I am *not* referring to rituals or systems of belief that serve only to hand over our inner power to others for their use in our domination and exploitation. Neither does it point to a belief system that offers bliss or fulfillment only in some future, other reality. Rather I point to

or economic worlds will look like even a few years from now. Both our inner and outer assumptions and manifestations will change beyond what we can comprehend today. Our principal challenge is not in coming up with goals, demands, or even any kind of plan. Rather, our challenge lies entirely in finding the motivation to open ourselves physically, mentally, and spiritually to the changes needed for our survival.

This model of society cannot continue. Surviving its collapse will not be from market-driven new products or services, nor the result of a global consensus. We have already seen the collapse of small pockets of formerly-bustling or at least viable communities: New Orleans after Katrina, Staten Island after Sandy, or the local parks in your town where the homeless camp out in better weather, the underpasses in worse weather. We see it in the wildfires, larger than usual; we see it in flooding, the so-called *100-year flood* that sometimes happens two years in a row. Look at Colorado: 2012 and its largest wildfire ever, and in 2013 its most devastating floods. For those residents affected by these events, as they gather together on the doorstep of the closed market and discuss what to do next, *collapse* is not some potential, future event; for them life will never be the same. Increasingly, rebuilding requires resources that are tapped out. We don't have the resources to rebuild every location that will be devastated by nature's wrath or social dissent and disruption. Besides, it makes no sense to rebuild Miami after the second storm surge; it's best to cut our losses and relocate millions of people instead, and to start over on higher ground than to keep rebuilding, forever.

a connection with all that is that leads us to experience ourselves as one part of that Whole, without the need for an intermediary to grant us access to our inherent integrity.

Our response needs to be intense, to match the challenges we face. We are capable of focusing on human values, and our own personal expectations, and to derive ways of being that support life rather than exploit or take it. That will be the model that works: not one specific laundry list of changes, but a wholesale, profound, new systemic design that builds on our fundamental, heart-felt values of inclusion and nurturing and incorporates care for our nest as much as care for our own lives. Solutions that address single issues, be they climate change, politics, economics, or environment, will not work. Our world is interconnected, in ways that we still cannot see, despite decades of research. We still can't explain how gravity works, or why photons of light can be both particles and waves simultaneously, or how entangled particles communicate at faster-than-light speeds, or why *placebo* is often the most effective treatment of illness¹¹.

And importantly, we can't get distracted by the perceived need to *stop* something; we focus on its replacement instead. As Mother Teresa has been quoted, "I'm not against war, I'm for peace." Our situation is not about saving the planet; indeed, Earth will be fine in a few thousand or million years no matter how badly we foul our nest, or how quickly we kill off most or all life on her surface. This is about saving what we call

¹¹ In late 2013, a paper was published that introduces lay people to a concept: the ***amplituhedron***. Attempting to explain quantum physics and include gravity, which current theories do not, this construct has been discovered that appears to open a new path of exploration: problem is, it proves that space and time are both constructs of our minds, not reality! Stay tuned for more as physicists refine this equation.

civilization, by which we mean our ability to live long, meaningful, and productive lives while attempting to control and exploit the entire world around us. And how are we doing in that regard? What changes would you like to see in your own life? And do you yet recognize that you cannot have an acceptable lifestyle without ensuring that the ecosystem in which you live is also successful?

I must admit, I am eager to get started. In fact, I believe that we will soon be forced to make big changes in our systems and in our lifestyles. Capitalism can't last forever with a sole focus on profit at the expense of life and ecosystem. There is little ecosystem left to plunder; and those whose lives are threatened are not only increasing in number, but increasing in understanding of what has driven us to this point. Remember, it was not a lack of factories, or labor, or materials that engendered the Great Depression. It was in fact only a lack of money. That is like saying we have the lumber and appliances, we have the construction workers and the nails, but we can't build any more houses because we don't have any *inches*. Think about what really ended the Great Depression: World War II. It isn't true that the New Deal ended the Depression, although that collection of government assistance programs helped ease the suffering of many. Rather, it was a problem that there was **no money, no capital**, and the system demanded that money be the core piece of any transaction involving goods and labor and a person's need. The war was a catalyst that forced people to step outside that paradigm for a few years: they borrowed money, they printed money, they bartered, they did what they had to do to survive and to funnel resources into the war effort. You fight with your real resources and money is just one of several tools for mobilizing real resources. Everyone knows that. What people forget is that this is true in

peacetime as well. No matter what you manage to conjure up inside your fiat monetary system, **you can't conjure up real resources that you don't have.** But by the same token, if you in fact have real resources available, then a **"lack of money" is never a good reason to fail to mobilize them.** As we awaken to this understanding, we will begin to rise up and claim our birthright; we will take back the economy and the government that have been stolen from us. We will craft a life that is rewarding and sustaining, nurturing and educational, without being exploitive and dominating. We will rebel against the chains that hold us to the grindstone.

I mean to corrupt you to Empire.

Not a rebel for rebel's sake, but as a way to challenge our defining assumptions and prevalent prejudices (society's, as well as our own!) We have undergone a slow-motion coup d'état in which corporatism has taken over the country. This neo-feudalism has enslaved us as effectively as any dictator or king, by enticing us into consumerism and ensnaring us with debt. There is an inner party of 2 – 4%, a layer of bureaucracy that shields them from the poor and used-to-be-middle classes, all the while doing their best through propaganda to keep everyone distracted and craving their next money fix.

Revolt is our only hope.

This call for rebellion is a plea to withdraw your support from the existing paradigm. That action will be called out as being treason, terrorism, or irresponsible. Yet withholding your support, and your skills at building other ways to survive in the midst of the dysfunction, are the very acts that will speed the old story's demise. That is the core of rebellion, and although you may not yet see it, others are having success all around us. There are

cooperatives transforming business, local currencies and time banks transforming money and economic relationships, farmers transforming food and yoga teachers transforming consciousness¹², even if slyly. The only real questions now are what do we want the transformation to look like, and how do you feel called to participate?

¹² Consciousness, meaning an awareness of *self* as well as an awareness of one's interconnectedness with all that is. On a spectrum of individual vs. collective, our culture indoctrinates us into isolation and self. This book looks at expanding our awareness into the realms of connection and relationship, leaving isolation behind.

Where Did We Come From?

Let's look back at where this all started: long before Man began to settle into communities, fed by growing crops and bled by Kings and Lords. The first artifacts that we ascribe to our ancestors date from 2.5 million years ago. *Humans*, with our body shape and size, date from about 200,000 years ago. We have used agriculture for less than 5% of *that* time. Now before you protest that agriculture was progress, it might behoove us to look at what life was like for those who did not practice it. And let me be careful here: I am not advocating that we smash our electronics, destroy every tractor, and look to eating berries and nuts for the rest of our (possibly miserable) lives. For one thing, there are too many of us to do that, and I'm not about to get into the discussion about who should live and who should die as we drop our population to a level that is manageable. I am aware that there are pathologies in every lifestyle, Primal or Modern too, and I don't intend to gloss over the problems of indigenous views without question. But what I am saying is this: can we look at what enabled our species to evolve over a few million years, and glean what was important about their attitudes and lifestyle that might help us craft a sustainable life today? Obviously, they managed to get along for most of our history without technology; and now that we have so thoroughly mucked things up, can we identify the roots of our mistakes?

The Primal Way of Life¹³ offers several aspects that differ quite radically from today's American, technological, and industrial society:

¹³ I use *Primal* to mean a lifestyle before agriculture when people live *inside of Nature* and have direct contact with the cycles of the natural world, and who perceive that world as

- Primal societies offer people the ability to **feel connected and secure**. From birth, people are shown that they are connected to Nature, and since “I am very much a part of the world around me, and not separate, and I am connected to my kin and neighbors, who I know *have my back* because they have always been deeply involved in my life, then I feel safe.” It is ludicrous, through Primal eyes, to speak of *environment* or even *Nature* as something that exists *out there*. That attitude is immersed in a false sense of separation. Rather, beauty is apparent in wholeness; health manifests from wholeness; goodness is demonstrated by *integrity*, or wholeness. There is only One, and we are but a small part of it, dependent upon the myriad of life that abounds within it.
- Primal societies offer people an inherent sense of **integrity and centeredness**; which manifests not as having the psychological *need* for effective boundaries to avoid being *hurt*, or to define myself by my relations with others (“Where and how do I fit in?”) but instead by my deep knowing of who I am, what I feel, how to react to my emotions, and how to behave in respectful relationship with all of life around me. It is impossible to feel connected with what is **real and natural** while spending every moment inside an artificial construction (room, home, city, internet connection) that claims to be a *better reality*. Our current culture’s *old story* is reflected in our language: *wild* is

sacred. This is interchangeable with *hunter-gatherers*; and this lifestyle, although almost gone, has remained alive even today in a few pockets around the world.

unsafe, *tame* is not; *natural* is baseline or minimal, *artificial* means enhanced or better.

- In Primal society, everyone is expected to **fully participate** in life; anthropologist Stanley Diamond explains that the average man of the hunter-gatherer African Nama people is, “...*an expert hunter, a keen observer of Nature, a craftsman who can make a kit bag of tools and weapons, a herder who knows the habits and needs of cattle, a direct participant in a variety of tribal rituals and ceremonies, and well-versed in the legends, tales and proverbs of his people.*” You can probably list as many tasks at which you are equally adept; but what makes the primary difference between the two of you is that the tribesman is not unique amongst his tribe: everyone in his tribe would be expected to be able to strike out on his or her own, and not only survive, but thrive by using the knowledge garnered during their upbringing. They could start a new tribe that would mirror their old one, in other words. We, as specialists within our society, have long ago left the *details* of our lives to someone else. We could hardly recreate a glass to use to drink the water that we likely couldn’t find on our own, should the taps in our kitchen ever run dry.
- In Primal society, everyone also participates in decision making, or **democracy** as we call it now; although what we mean when we use the word *democracy* today **is not** what Primal people mean. The original version means that mature adults and elders come to understand the issue at hand, through experience and by sharing their own perspective, and each person has a

voice in the decision that the group makes. It doesn't mean that I argue until I get my way, that I buy votes through making campaign contributions or by making campaign promises of milk and honey, or that I manipulate people into voting for me; it just means that my opinion is heard and respected and thus I can ultimately support whatever decision is made. The essence of democracy is this: we govern ourselves not by law, by decree, or by regulation but through **mutual agreement**; laws made and ultimately enforced by those people who live in the midst of the consequences, who bear the brunt of the results of their decisions. But this process is unworkable once the group becomes too large¹⁴. Primal groups are based on face-to-face relationships; if a group happens to get too large, some people will split off and form a new tribe in the next valley. This was more likely due to resource (food and water) constraints than any sense of the people that their democracy was about to become unworkable however. The fact remains that the group must remain small for democracy to function well.

- The real reason democracy is important is that it lends itself to **managing our society without**

¹⁴ It is posited that 125 – 150 is the maximum number of people that can effectively use democracy as their template for decision-making. Nested democracy, where one group decides then designates a representative to carry that decision and its reasoning to a conclave, at ever-higher levels, might work for larger groups; the big issue there would be how that representative is selected, as voting is inherently flawed with games of power and resources giving unfair advantage to a few.

hierarchy. With everyone involved, there is no need for someone to arbitrarily or unilaterally make a decision on behalf of everyone else. There may be someone who seems to always offer good advice about when and where to move the camp, and someone else who knows where game will be plentiful or easily accessible; and the group can choose to follow their advice with little or no discussion. But there is no need in a true democracy for someone to tell others what to do *for their own good*. Note, since this is where people often bring up the word *anarchy*, that anarchy is an **absence of government**, not tragic chaos. Social norms, while not carrying jail penalties or a need to be enforced by methods requiring taxation, are active even today in our culture. These norms would be even more crucial in a society without government. But one advantage norms carry is that they evolve over time as the culture grows; our current system of government lags behind social development, and laws that are out-of-date either stifle our expression of who we are, or syphon resources to enforcement of irrelevant statutes. On the flip side, we must get away from pushing what should be our responsibility for our own safety onto government instead. On 30 June 2013, 19 firefighters died near Yarnell, Arizona when the wildfire they were fighting overran their position less than half a mile outside of town. Analysis of satellite photos taken before and after the fire showed that there were 503 structures in the area, 47% of them were destroyed by the fire. 53 of the structures met minimum fire protection standards, meaning no overhanging vegetation and some space clear of brush around the

structure, and less than 10 of these were damaged, and the 14 structures that met Firewise standards and had a 30-foot buffer zone were all **undamaged**. Brave men paid the ultimate price because some homeowners relied upon a government service, firefighting, rather than taking measures to ensure their own safety and that of their property. One might argue also, that undue concern was placed on saving property; a concern that ultimately cost 19 brave men their lives. Once everyone was safe, the fire could have been left to burn, destroying **only** property. In Australia, official policy is not to call for evacuations ahead of wildfires; instead, in that society homeowners stay and defend their property. It is also clear that Australian homeowners, fearing for their own safety, do a better job of clearing brush and building with fireproof roofs rather than relying upon firefighters to stave off destruction with the deck stacked against them. We have to ask, why do we depend on government for this kind of help? And truly, **what is government for?**

- To be clear; democracy is about setting boundaries, making decisions, and providing support, **not voting for leaders**. Leadership has four major components: Power Over, Social Power, Power from Within, and Solidarity.
 - **Power Over** is what we often mean when we mention **power**: authority backed by force or exile, or power that is structured in a top-down and hierarchical manner. In the extreme, it is dictatorial or tyrannical, and always leads to rebellion or collapse.

- **Social Power** is authority granted to someone by the group, and not through any formal process; it comes from who you are, or what you do. Someone proves they are capable of making good decisions, or of carrying the group's needs and desires top-of-mind, and so the group allows them to make decisions unilaterally. Not everyone will grant a particular individual the same amount of social power; sometimes this becomes a problem when some believe in the potential leader's abilities and some don't. This authority continues only as long as the group is satisfied; it can disappear in an instant, and since it is not the result of any vote, this loss of social power brooks no appeal, no new elections, and carries no power that can be wielded by threat.
- **Power from Within** might well be called confidence or poise; this is the authority that we feel inside ourselves. Power from within might be accepted by the group, or not. It arises from our courage, compassion¹⁵, creativity, or insight. Geronimo, the Apache warrior, is a great example of this power: he never viewed himself as a leader. He merely decided what he would do next and then did it; if others chose to accompany him,

¹⁵ Unlike empathy which *feels* the pain of another, compassion is about *acknowledging* the pain of others; often accompanied by a desire to lessen their suffering. Beware letting that desire to end suffering lead you to act out of pity!

then that was fine. One drawback is that because my power within is unique to me, my shadow may have a way of cropping up at inopportune times and spoiling my plans. One benefit is that if I act as though I have the power I need, I can accomplish much more than if I wait for power to be bestowed upon me from a societal structure or by my group.

- **Solidarity** is different from the other three: it is power that arises when people share intentions, visions, dreams, and/or goals. It does not require agreement, only that we **share values**. Through Solidarity, our clearly defined **common interest** can bring together diverse groups with otherwise divergent agendas. This power is most often effective when marginalized groups come together, intent on accomplishing something that separately they would be too weak to do by themselves. The Civil Rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s are a great example as people of color, unions, and churches, to name just a few of the groups, came together to fight for their rights. In our modern times, conservatives rail against the use of militarized police in Waco, Ruby Ridge, and the raid on the Gibson guitar factory¹⁶. Liberals are angry over the use

¹⁶ In 2009, armed federal marshals shut down production at the Memphis factory, sent employees home, and confiscated wood that they claimed was evidence the company was trafficking in illegal products.

of militarized police for immigration raids and the dismantling of the Occupy encampments. Yet while they could join in common cause against the militarization of police, instead they snipe at one another and by remaining scattered and divided, get nothing accomplished in the end.

- Of these four types of leadership, only Power Over can grant authority through voting, a process that usually ends up with the candidate with the most resources winning regardless of his or her beliefs or values. Power Over comes from a contest that **is not about leadership ability** in other words, a factor that makes it the least useful of the four types of power in any situation where we desire equality and justice.
- Primal societies practice **equality of the sexes**; this is a most difficult subject to get our heads around. In our society today, relations between the sexes are so muddled and confused because of successive generations that have exhibited codependence, romantic fantasies and addictions, violence against women, and sex addictions that we can barely have a respectful discussion about the issue of gender equality. We have few good role models to show us how incomplete we truly are when we allow one side to dominate the other. Advocating equality, whether between the sexes or races or classes, is not just about me offering something to an *other*; really it is about allowing me to be whole and complete. As everyone is interconnected, part of one Web, repressing

some part of the Web only makes my own world repressed. How do we value the contributions that each person makes to society? How do we offer every person the freedom to express their feelings, emotions, and thoughts, and the safety to go about their business without fear of abuse? Let's be clear about the difference between emotions and feelings. Emotions, like anger or sadness, are the physical expression of a program I've imprinted that starts a chemical reaction playing out within my body. When we say we are *honoring our feelings* we usually mean we are reinforcing the programs our teachers or media or parents have provided to our ego, and really mean we are reacting to our emotions that are being driven by chemicals. **A feeling is different: it is very quiet, it comes from the depths of our being, and it is our internal guidance system asking us to lean into this moment and the experience that is becoming available.** Some would call a feeling *the voice of God*, others would say it is an *intuition*. But because we are asleep to reality, we experience *emotions* as if they were *feelings* coming from our heart, when in fact, they are just habits that come from our programming. Becoming aware of this is the key to being able to change consciousness and begin creating a reality that better suits our needs. Why do we continue to drive cars when we know oil is problematic? We drive because of our programming, which has made the *freedom* of driving an emotion we value and which creates the need to get the credits called money from a place called work that is too far away to walk to, in order to survive. This programming, with its

focus on profit and control, **is insane**. It is a sign that we haven't always structured our society in ways that oppress women in particular; a sign that throughout most of our evolution as a species **we were all equal**, that this desire for equality is so strong in us. What would equality look like? We would raise everyone, men and women, to be both nurturing and assertive, as the situation requires. We all would be strong and able to travel with freedom outside of our immediate neighborhood, without fear. We would all be able to feel and articulate our feelings with self-assurance and be respected for expressing them. We would all be intimately aware of our own inner worlds and feelings, and all of us would be involved with raising children, ours and our neighbors'. There would not be a division of labor simply because, as mentioned above, **everyone participates in all aspects** of community life. And relationships in Primal societies are entered into by choice, and left behind by choice. The Western ideal of contracts and social pressures creating marriages is mostly driven by the desire to pass on property to one's heirs, a novel idea that is only several centuries old. Unfortunately it is all-too-clear that marriage today is about power dynamics, something we would not need if we recognize the equality of each and every individual in our midst.

- Primal societies have more **leisure time**; despite technology, or maybe because of technology, we have too little time for face-to-face relationships and **fun**. Studies consistently show that hunter-gatherer societies may spend as much as 3 hours a day in *work*, but many

don't even require that much. Granted, sometimes men would go hunting for a week at a time; but they were also just as likely to do no work at all for a few weeks after returning with their game. Here's Kent McDougall, writing about Henry Hudson meeting the Algonquin Indians in 1609 in what is now called New York: *"They were living off the fat of the land. They lived so well yet worked so little that the industrious Dutch considered them indolent savages and soon replaced their good life with feudalism."*

- There's a story about a Wall Street stockbroker, on vacation in Mexico. He gets up early one morning and wanders out onto the beach outside his hotel. A fisherman has anchored his boat in waist-deep water and is bringing baskets of fish onto shore, and selling them to someone who will resell them in the local market. The stockbroker begins to talk with the fisherman, and learns about how much he earns from his morning catch, and how he goes out fishing for a few hours each dawn, and then rests for the remainder of the day. The broker does some quick mental math, and then makes the fisherman an offer: the broker will front him some money, in return for a share of the profits, and all the fisherman has to do is relocate his fishing boat to the Gulf Coast of Texas and fish from there. He can work all day, make lots of money for both himself and the broker, and within a dozen years he will be able to retire. The fisherman asks, "Retire? What

will I do when I retire?” The broker replies, “Why then you can come back here and live with your family and not have to work.” The fisherman then points out what is obvious to him, if not to the broker, “But I don’t work now. I go fishing in the morning because I love to be out on the sea; my family won’t wake up for another hour now, so I will spend the whole day with them already. Why do I want to leave them and work? Tell me how that makes sense...”

- May I tell you about Tony and Mabel? Tony was a bounty hunter, and he and Mabel would come into a restaurant from time to time where I worked. They were in their 50s, and they talked constantly about how, once they retired at age 65, they would travel back to Minnesota and spend good, quality time with their grandchildren, and travel to Europe and the South Seas, places they both had yearned to see since they were very young. You likely know where this is heading: Mabel got cancer, and died at age 62, their hopes of visiting the grandchildren and of traveling unfulfilled. Whether so much early death is due to the chemicals in our food, air, and water (cancer in 1900 caused 3% of all deaths in the US, in 2010 they caused more than 38%) or the stress on our bodies from living in this pressure-packed technological construct is a whole different discussion; we cannot postpone anything we hope to accomplish with our

one wild and precious life until some later day.

- Primal societies, for the most part, have **good nutrition**; certainly their food was more nutritious than the food *products* we buy wrapped in plastic in today's industrial economy. Oil has permeated our soil, by being the source of fertilizers and pesticides, and has killed off most of the bacteria that keep the soil alive. As a result, the food grown by the large industrial-agriculture processes is less nutritious today¹⁷ than it was forty years ago. One of the most common misconceptions about Primal cultures is that they were starving; that was hardly the case. Although life expectancy is said to have been 30 -35 years, that is the average. One big reason it was so low is that there were high rates of infant mortality; if you lived past the age of five, your life expectancy was more like 50 years, not 30. And even then, the inability of Primal people to clean wounds well or heal following accidents led to many early deaths; understanding the **importance of sanitation** was the key factor (even more the modern chemicals used as drugs¹⁸) in increasing modern life expectancies in the 1800s. This fear of not having enough to eat has fostered much of what is dysfunctional in today's world: obesity, eating disorders, and nutritional deficiencies, and it is a

¹⁷ Some studies show a 40% decrease in nutritional attributes from common food like corn and tomatoes

¹⁸ This is clear when you understand that some societies **not dependent** upon drugs to cure every health complaint, places like Cuba for example, have longer life expectancy than the U.S.

fear that arose with the advent of agriculture and the notion of private property¹⁹, not the Primal lifestyle. Another way to look at this epidemic of disease goes like this: our ancestors did not have abundant amounts of salt, sugar, or fat in their diets. Humans evolved in this world learning to eat as much of those scarce resources as they could find, and our bodies are engineered to store any excess for use during times when the food supply was short of them. Fast-forward to now, when salt, sugar, and fat are mainstays of processed foods, and we over-consume these nutrients that are vital but problematic in huge quantities and when we are not subject to shortages: thus we have food-related disease running rampant in those eating a processed food diet. And given that nearly one-half of the world's 7+ billion people will go to bed hungry for some portion of their life, we have not managed to solve this problem despite (or perhaps because of) our technology and know-how. It may help you feel secure to know that there are always oranges and tomatoes and frozen dinners at the local market (at least as long as the oil needed for long distance transportation lasts and the money doesn't hyper-inflate away), but our capitalist method of distributing our food is another source of our

¹⁹ It is hard to convert to the Western notion of land with a fence that precludes *trespassing* when your lifestyle depends on being able to roam the territory and harvesting the various fruits, nuts, seeds and game whenever and wherever they are ready to eat. One acre won't suffice.

food problems²⁰. There are many unexamined assumptions about food that bear investigation. We will look into more equitable ways to distribute all our resources soon. Why is this important? Because healthy diets and relaxed lifestyles limit how many people will die from cancer, heart disease, diabetes, or stress-related illness. An additional key factor of how the Primal diet was so successful, and one we ignore today at our peril, is that the variety and variability of the food sources meant little likelihood of a complete harvest failure. In today's industrial agriculture, and especially as GMO crops have narrowed the choices of different crops and varieties that farmers can plant, we run the risk of disease or drought wiping out the only source of corn, for example. Crop diversity, just like spreading your investments into many different types of assets in a *diversified portfolio*, means that the failure of one item in the basket doesn't lead directly to starvation. Putting all of our eggs in that one basket can, however. And let's be clear: the Primal lifestyle was really one of *gathering-hunters*; they relied much more on fruits, nuts, and plants than on meat, and much of the protein in the form of meat came from snails and frogs and other small creatures, rather than woolly mammoths.

- Primal societies maintain a **stable population**; unlike what has happened today with the advent of industrial agriculture. However, overpopulation today it is not all the fault of the

²⁰ More than 40% of food grown is thrown away at some point in the chain from farm to belly.

abundance of food; in primal cultures it was normal for mothers to nurse their children for three or four years. And they were typically infertile during that time, so it was like having birth control without taking drugs or having surgery. A stable population was a very handy attribute that allowed the groups to forage in an area, and leave enough of nature behind that it could replenish itself by next year (or next season). Yes, there was waste or pollution of their environment, as some pro-technology critics of the Primal lifestyle are fond of pointing out, and primal people were often unconcerned about tidying up after themselves. But they didn't generate the kinds of waste products that Nature could not deal with, like plastic, concrete, toxic chemicals, or radiation; and they also didn't outgrow their neighborhood such that they needed to commit genocide on the folks living on the other side of the hill in order to eat. Today we see birth rates fall when women become more educated and thus have greater hopes for the future, and when families migrate into cities as they begin to relax once they have a community to support them in their old age. Both of these issues, a feeling of contentment with what tomorrow will bring and a sense that others *have my back* are met by the primal lifestyle without the need to grow the population.

- Primal societies have come to terms with **morality**, if only because there was no privacy. Within your band or tribe, and without having the sense of isolation and separation that so pervades our Modern world, there was no need for a space in which you could be alone. Your business was also the tribe's business; everything

you did was done under the watchful eyes of someone, including sex. Today, many cultures around the world have much less inherent privacy than we here in America. In Thailand, with which I am very familiar, the majority of the people still live in the traditional Thai home which consists of one big room containing several generations of family. Mats are rolled up in the morning so there is room for preparing and eating food and, these days at least, likely watching TV. All sleep together in the one space, and as a result, the Thai peoples' sense of *personal space* is much smaller than ours in America. They are very comfortable getting very close when speaking with you. They take for granted that they will emerge from their pan-shower and dress themselves while remaining wrapped in a towel in the room where everyone is gathered. It is hard to do something the culture deems immoral when you are under constant scrutiny, unless you are willing to pay the price.

- Primal societies are inherently **sustainable**; and although we talk a lot about sustainability today, until we give up the notion that we know it all and can control the complex Web of Life within which we exist we will never reach that state of equilibrium. It's not about control, it's about treating all life with respect. And actually, when you put all of the aforementioned attributes together: feeling connected and secure, acting with integrity from a centered perspective, fully participating in the life around me, recognizing the importance of democracy and equality of the sexes, enjoying an abundance of leisure time so I remain calm and relaxed, enjoying good

nutrition, and reaping the benefits of a stable population, what better way is there to define *sustainable*? I can't think of what else I might want... except maybe some materials for arts, crafts, and writing!

Each of these aspects has a personal, an interpersonal, and a transpersonal dimension. Opening myself to the personal gives me the ability to experience my life fully. After all, what is life about, if not embracing new experiences? In the personal, I can adjust my beliefs and actions to come into integrity and wholeness with my world. This is where making changes in my life is important: new energy-efficient cars and light bulbs, recycling obsessively, sharing food grown in my front yard garden, all of these actions have a way of percolating into the collective consciousness; they affect everyone, in other words. We get our deepest satisfactions from emotions of love and belonging, and being creative by listening to the small voice inside our heart. When we build relationships with others, we are able to give our gifts, and this gives us feelings of accomplishment and the joy of generosity. And when we open to the transpersonal, the universal, we create space for non-ordinary reality to present itself and work miracles. Non-ordinary states of consciousness bring spiritual enlightenment, psychological breakthrough, and healing that can't be explained using the rational, everyday mind. By rupturing the façade of what our culture has determined and taught to be *normal*, we can re-arrange our energy into patterns and forms that make problems (and illness) disappear. Paraphrasing Einstein, problems can't be solved by the consciousness that created them, awareness that is unexplainable by the old must be tapped in order to remedy its dysfunction. He, despite being one of the greatest

scientists of all time, was aware of the impact provided by unexplainable experiences in shaping our world. While we can't explain them even today, history is rife with examples of how non-ordinary states of awareness have changed lives, both individual and collective. By knowing I'm connected and safe, and by identifying and using my inherent energy field, I can venture into other realms and bring back the knowledge and abilities I need in order to grow and flourish. And as I grow, so do we all. Science, by focusing on being able to *explain* as a mandatory part of accepting any experience, builds boundaries that keep us locked into a very small existence, and ultimately limits our understanding of the bigger milieu that we are immersed in. When I approach the Earth as a field of energy that is populated with a myriad of sacred life forms, I will manifest my understanding by showing respect for that life and ***learn to communicate with it***. *That commands respect*, from everyone.

There we were, in the Garden. We had what we needed to live, we were developing language and thus telling stories and increasing our knowledge and our numbers. And then we thought that we could be like gods: controlling and manipulating our world, and turning our environment into a vast, limitless-in-our-minds, pile of resources. As we delved into agriculture it changed our society into one based on power and patriarchy and control, of Nature and of each other, too. We made *progress*, finding ways to save our knowledge and educate each other, at least those who had the resources to be able to spend time learning²¹. We had evolved away from a Primal lifestyle which gave us lots of leisure and instead found ourselves supporting not only our families

²¹ Note how changing from primal life to agriculture **drastically** reduced the amount of free time we have

but also our Lords and Kings, and especially their appetite for war. So once we discovered, amongst the cornucopia of Earth's resources an energy in coal and oil that could multiply our efforts dozens, hundreds, even thousands of times, then we thought we could not be stopped in our drive to manipulate the planet. We failed to see that even today, our knowledge of how this world works is limited, flawed, and **can never be whole** and integrated enough that we can simply tap it as a resource, there to fulfill our bidding.

What does it look like, this different, Primal, connected worldview?

- An anthropologist tells recently of being escorted to a small village by two members of a rainforest tribe in Ecuador. They traveled the footpath, and the anthropologist was amazed by the myriad life around him. Suddenly one of the men paused, knelt down, and closely examined a small flowering plant by the side of the path. He asked the other tribesman to look as well, and then they continued on their way. Upon arriving in the village, the two men called everyone together, and over the next hour, they described the flower they had seen, and the fact that it appeared to be sick and would likely die. They facilitated a discussion that led to the decision that the tribe would no longer use that footpath, as it seemed clear that their travel was impacting the flora badly.
- April 4, 1998; London Daily Telegraph: Two illiterate Kaiapo tribesmen were called in from 2,400 kilometers away to break the five-month long drought in the northern Amazon region Roraima. A wildfire there raged out of control: hundreds of firefighters were battling the flames

and weather forecasts based on NOAA-14 satellite imagery predicted the next rain would take weeks to develop. Upon their arrival, the two men had a leisurely dinner at a three-star hotel in the local capital of Boa Vista “We will make water fall” they promised, asking that they be allowed to work alone; their only *tools* were cipo leaves and taquara branches. After thirty minutes they returned from the banks of the Curupira River, and saying “It will rain” they retired to their room to sleep on beds, a novelty since they normally sleep in hammocks. Less than two hours later, the first reports came in to the fire emergency center: “It has started raining!” More reports came in, and by dawn, Boa Vista was in the midst of one of its heaviest downpours in living memory; so heavy that the airport, which had been closed frequently due to the heavy smoke from the fire, was now closed because of the lack of visibility caused by the rainfall. The fires petered out and the humidity rose to its normal 97%. All the tribesmen ever said was that they had talked to Becororoti, a famous ancestor with divine power, who had gone to heaven when he died and was turned into rain.

- Terry Tempest Williams is author of “*Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert*”. In the NY Times article, “*In the Shadow of Extinction*” published February 02, 2003, she wrote in part: “Prairie dogs create habitat, not only for themselves, but for other grassland inhabitants. With their mounds and extensive burrowing systems, their home is home to myriad other creatures. One study of black-tailed prairie dogs

identified more than 140 species of wildlife associated with prairie dog towns, including bison, pronghorn antelope and burrowing owls, as well as carnivores like rattlesnakes, coyotes and black-footed ferrets. Prairie dogs create community. Destroy them and you destroy a varied world. Barre Toelken, a folklorist in the American studies department at Utah State University, tells the following story:

In 1950, government officials proposed getting rid of prairie dogs on parts of the Navajo Reservation to protect the roots of the sparse desert grasses and thereby maintain some grazing for sheep. The Navajo elders objected, insisting that "if you kill all the prairie dogs, there will be no one to cry for the rain."

The officials carried out their plan, and the desert near Chilchinbito, Ariz., became a virtual wasteland. Without the ground-turning process of the burrowing animals, the soil became solidly packed, impervious to rain. The result: fierce runoff creating devastating erosion."

[My comment: It turns out that the burrows were vital: as the Moon moved water in underground aquifers up and down, it pumped moisture-laden, ion-charged air out of the earth and into the atmosphere, which fed the grasses, which the prairie dogs then ate. The burrowing also allowed moisture to penetrate and nourish the roots of the grasses. The prairie dogs weren't *takers*: they were an integral part of the harmonious,

interconnected ecosystem in which they lived.]

Terry concluded: "...As we find ourselves on the eve of war, why should we care about the fate of an invisible animal in remote Western grasslands that spends half of its life underground? Because the story of the Utah prairie dog **is the story of the range of our compassion.** If we can extend our idea of community to include the lowliest of creatures, we will be closer to finding a pathway to empathy and tolerance. If we cannot accommodate them, the shadow we will see [on Groundhog Day] on our own home ground will be a forecast of our extended winter of the soul."

To our Western minds, the notion that someone might notice a sick flower along a path is merely amazing, but that the tribe would abandon such a useful path is beyond our comprehension. We have no frame of reference that would indicate a need for such communication or responsibility; and we lack the compassion for life that would generate this amount of concern for the wellbeing of something as *small and insignificant* as a flower. We can't imagine that someone can speak with the dead and bring rain to a land un-shadowed by cloud. We think that Nature must meet **our** needs; and that we are doing *good* when we pass laws protecting endangered species and all of that. But do we truly know how everything fits together, how it blends and harmonizes, how life connects and depends on one another?

Our *story*, steeped as it is today in science, has been used to wall us off from our surroundings by placing our

trust in what we think of as our *rational* mind. The Greek philosopher Parmenides set us on the path of reason when he posited that our senses deceive us and cannot be trusted, and that reason is the only useful path to track our world. Yet he also reasoned later that nothing can actually move, proving that there are hard limits on the effectiveness of reason. Also, today science has *discovered* that there are neurons in heart muscle, and neurons in our gut. All of these centuries, as we have struggled to live in a world tightly enclosed just above our sinuses, our sayings such as, “Listen to your gut” or “Listen to your heart” turn out to have a basis in *fact* after all. And think of this: your spinal cord can be broken such that you cannot feel or direct your body below your neck, and yet somehow, your heart continues to beat and your stomach continues to process food. Both manage to continue their functioning without receiving commands from our rational mind. We moderns *think* that the first peoples went around tasting everything, and that which didn’t kill them became food. We leave out the ~~possibility~~ likelihood that they instead sensed and communicated with the world less from their mind and more from their gut²². It would literally be true to say that the plants instructed them in what to eat what to take as medicine, and even what path to take through the forest or jungle. In modern times however, our denial of the world we inhabit is complete: I don’t need to acknowledge the fact that I have responsibility for actions I take that harm all the myriad kinds of life that lives in my immediate surroundings. Yet, when we take in what it means to be just a part of the larger whole, we can begin to build the world our heart knows is possible, a world that functions

²² See “New Self, New World” by Philip Shepherd if this way of seeing the world interests you

not from money or domination, but from love and generosity. That is the world we need to manifest now.

The shamans of the Primal world didn't, as our Western minds tend to *think*, privilege the needs of the tribe over the needs of the world; rather, they were the critical link in a chain of communication by which energy and understanding would pass from the world to the humans. They held conversations with their environment, not placing their primary allegiance with the human race but rather within the larger world: not with Man but with God²³. This of course, being dependent upon the shaman's own experiences and interpretations, means that any *remedies* they bring back to the group are likely not repeatable: every situation will be different, with different causes and solutions. And in modern times, we tend to attach the thought *speech* to the word *communication*, when communicating in the Primal world was more about sensing energy than having a chat. Our world is full of mystery, and as such, open to wondrous and miraculous energies that can neither be understood nor controlled. Sickness can't be seen as being *caused* by a particular germ; that germ is ubiquitous in the environment even now. Why, if you are being constantly exposed to the germ, do you one day suddenly become ill? There must be a disturbance in your energy that has led to a symptom, the illness, so that you might change the energy and become well again. A father would not say, "My child is sick", instead he would say, "My family is sick". A shaman does not say, "Your family is sick",

²³ *God*: such a loaded term. I will use God in this book to name the mystery that lies at the **root** of all that exists; that which is powerful and ineffable, the eternal Universal Mind, the ultimate ground of all being, and which can only be known through experience, not rational reasoning.

rather he would say, “Our village is sick”. A medicine man would not go seeking a *medicine* for someone, he would try to determine how the energies were wrong, and what might help bring the energy back into alignment with life and health.

Of course we have a completely different world view today. But it is important to understand deeply that it is just that: one different view. Your view, constructed and then constantly reinforced by parents and media telling you what is what, what is acceptable, what is expected, and what your limits are, surrounds you with a screen upon which the world has been painted that you look upon and believe is the real world. It is however, merely like a canvas: both static and seemingly unchanging, and as easily destroyed as any painting on a sheet of light canvas. Once it this view is torn and we can see more of the real world that lies behind it, we find a world that is far more alive and vibrant, but also much larger and more mysterious because we weren't told about it; we have no description of what is out here, no map of this new territory, and thus we have trouble controlling it. It is similar to how elephants are trained: within days of an elephant's birth, its trainer will tie one end of a small rope, a string really, around its front foot and the other end to a tree. As the young one is unable to break the rope, still being weak so soon after birth, it learns to associate the rope with being confined and unable to move around at will. From then on, even after the elephant is fully grown and able to snap the rope almost by just thinking about it, it will stay docilely tied to any object with the tiny rope, because it does not realize that what it was taught as a youngster ***is no longer valid***. As long as we accept a limited world view confined to what we are told by authorities and media, we are like an elephant: tied to an old, small world and unaware that we could be exploring, and enjoying, a much bigger

stage. The world has much we have yet to explore; let's break out of the old view and get into some fresh territory with new, curious senses!

We learn when we look back at how things used to be. Especially in the Western story, we have no real understanding of what life used to be like. Of course, life was not all *peaches and cream* for hunter-gatherers; large predators took their toll and engendered fear, we lacked an understanding of how poor hygiene led to illness and death, and weather (or the difficulty in controlling one's body temperature) made living unpleasant much of the time. But we humans tend to forget our past. We depend on stories, and more recently books, to tell us about what life was like *before*. We have all heard stories from family members, stories that shaped our worldview. But it is likely that the personal stories we heard from our family, including those who have now passed, teach us about life *after* we began to use oil. Today oil is in everything we touch: our food, our household items, our homes and vehicles and our high tech toys. Oil brings us tomatoes in January and the medicine that saves the life of our child when he or she has an infection. It also enables us to specialize; in 1870, 65% of working Americans were farmers, providing food for themselves and others. Today that figure has fallen to less than 2%, and less than 15% of Americans today work in jobs that provide the basic necessities of food, shelter, warmth, and water. The rest of us are free to work, or not, in jobs that impact the *quality* of life, rather than the *quantity*. Yet oil has only been captured from the ground beneath our feet a mere 150 years; and has only been even a *noticeable portion* of our energy use since 1920. Maybe because we can no longer talk with family members who remember what life was like before the advent of oil's energy and byproducts, we

have forgotten how much life has changed in this short, recent blip in human history. Writing about America in “*Is U.S. Economic Growth Over?*” Robert Gordon reminds us:

“But most aspects of life in 1870 (except for the rich) were dark, dangerous, and involved backbreaking work. There was no electricity in 1870. The insides of dwelling units were not only dark but also smoky, due to residue and air pollution from candles and oil lamps. The enclosed iron stove had only recently been invented and much cooking was still done on the open hearth. Only the proximity of the hearth or stove was warm; bedrooms were unheated and family members carried warm bricks with them to bed.

“But the biggest inconvenience was the lack of running water. Every drop of water for laundry, cooking, and indoor chamber pots had to be hauled in by the housewife, and wastewater hauled out. The average North Carolina housewife in 1885 had to walk 148 miles per year while carrying 35 tons of water. Coal or wood for open-hearth fires had to be carried in and ashes had to be collected and carried out. There was no more important event that liberated women than the invention of running water and indoor plumbing, which happened in urban America between 1890 and 1930²⁴.

“While the railroad connected the cities, there were horses on every urban street. Within the cities, steam power was not practical, so everything was hauled by horses. The average

²⁴ Even in 1930, 25% of homes did not have running water, and 35% did not have electricity.

horse produced 20 to 50 pounds of manure and a gallon of urine daily, applied without restraint to stables and streets. The **daily** amount of manure worked out to between 5 and 10 tons per urban square mile, all requiring disgusting human labor to remove. The low standard of living reflected not just the small amount that people could purchase but also the amount of effort at the workplace and at home where they had to expend to perform ordinary tasks.

“Life expectancy was only 45 years in 1870, compared to 79 years recently. Why? Infant mortality resulted from poor sanitation, water-transmitted diseases, and contaminated milk. The first attempts at urban sanitation infrastructure emptied the waste into the rivers because there was a theory at that time that rivers were self-cleansing. And there were further causes of low life expectancy: hard physical labor and work-related injuries. In 1900, 13,000 people died in railroad deaths, about a quarter of them railroad employees, and others included both passengers—because boilers would blow up—or pedestrians run down by the railroad. There was also violence and lynching.

“A crude measure can be developed regarding the quality of work. A uniform set of occupational definitions goes back to 1870. One can go through the list and label each occupation as relatively “pleasant” or “unpleasant.” Unpleasant jobs include farming, farm laborers, blue-collar workers, urban laborers, and household servants. Relatively more pleasant were such occupations as sales and clerical work, or professionals and managers. By this

classification in 1870 87 percent of the jobs were unpleasant; but by 2010 only 22 percent were unpleasant.

“The “Great Inventions” of the Second Industrial Revolution utterly changed living and working conditions, particularly in urban America, within half a century and their full impact was largely complete during the century following 1870. The inventions can be grouped into five categories: (1) electricity and all its spin-offs; (2) the internal combustion engine and all its subsidiary improvements right up to the interstate highway system; (3) running water, indoor plumbing, and central heating; (4) rearranging molecules, including everything to do with petroleum, chemicals, plastics, and pharmaceuticals; and finally (5) the set of communication and entertainment devices invented within the remarkably short period between 1885 and 1900, including the telephone, the phonograph, popular photography, radio, and motion pictures.

“The effects of these inventions and sub-inventions can be grouped by the particular impact they had on animal and human effort. Motor power replaced animal power. To maintain a horse every year cost approximately the same as buying a horse. Imagine today that for your \$30,000 car you had to spend \$30,000 every year on fuel and repairs. That’s an interesting measure of how much efficiency was gained from replacing the horses. Gone was the need for unsanitary and repulsive jobs of people who had to remove horse waste.

“None of the transportation inventions of the 1870-1900 period were more important than the

automobile. Prior to its invention, there was almost no chance for travel by working class families either from the farm to the city, or from the city to the countryside. Ownership of horses and carriages was a privilege limited to the rich and the elite. The automobile changed all that, and even more for farmers than city residents; by 1926 fully 93 percent of Iowa farmers owned motor cars.”

And of course, suburbia was the result of our use of petroleum and its byproducts, and the unintended consequences of this shift in our lifestyles are what we are dealing with today.

Before we get too smug, thinking that we are so much better educated today, see if you can pass this test:

1895 8th grade final exam

Remember when grandparents and great-grandparents stated that they only had an 8th grade education? Well, check this out. This is the eighth-grade final exam from 1895 in Salina, Kansas, USA. It was taken from the original document on file at the Smokey Valley Genealogical Society and Library in Salina, and reprinted by the Salina Journal. Can you pass it?

Grammar (Time: one hour)

- 1. Give nine rules for the use of capital letters.*
- 2. Name the parts of speech and define those that have no modifications.*
- 3. Define verse, stanza and paragraph*
- 4. What are the principal parts of a verb? Give principal parts of 'lie', 'play,' and 'run'.*
- 5. Define case; illustrate each case.*
- 6 What is punctuation? Give rules for principal*

marks of punctuation.

7 - 10. Write a composition of about 150 words and show therein that you understand the practical use of the rules of grammar.

Arithmetic (Time, 1 hour 15 minutes)

- 1. Name and define the Fundamental Rules of Arithmetic.*
- 2. A wagon box is 2 ft. Deep, 10 feet long, and 3 ft. Wide. How many bushels of wheat will it hold?*
- 3. If a load of wheat weighs 3,942 lbs., what is it worth at 50cts/bushel, deducting 1,050 lbs. for tare?*
- 4. District No 33 has a valuation of \$35,000. What is the necessary levy to carry on a school seven months at \$50 per month, and have \$104 for incidentals?*
- 5. Find the cost of 6,720 lbs. of coal at \$6.00 per ton.*
- 6. Find the interest of \$512.60 for 8 months and 18 days at 7 percent.*
- 7. What is the cost of 40 boards 12 inches wide and 16 feet long at \$20 per meter?*
- 8. Find bank discount on \$300 for 90 days (no grace) at 10 percent.*
- 9. What is the cost of a square farm at \$15 per acre, the distance of which is 640 rods?*
- 10. Write a Bank Check, a Promissory Note, and a Receipt*

U.S. History (Time, 45 minutes)

- 1. Give the epochs into which U.S. History is divided*
- 2. Give an account of the discovery of America by Columbus*

3. *Relate the causes and results of the Revolutionary War.*
4. *Show the territorial growth of the United States*
5. *Tell what you can of the history of Kansas*
6. *Describe three of the most prominent battles of the Rebellion.*
7. *Who were the following: Morse, Whitney, Fulton, Bell, Lincoln, Penn, and Howe?*
8. *Name events connected with the following dates: 1607, 1620, 1800, 1849, 1865.*

Orthography (Time, one hour)

1. *What is meant by the following: alphabet, phonetic, orthography, etymology, syllabication?*
2. *What are elementary sounds? How classified?*
3. *What are the following, and give examples of each: trigraph, sub vocals, diphthong, cognate letters, lingual's*
4. *Give four substitutes for caret 'u.'*
5. *Give two rules for spelling words with final 'e.' Name two exceptions under each rule.*
6. *Give two uses of silent letters in spelling. Illustrate each.*
7. *Define the following prefixes and use in connection with a word: bi, dis, mis, pre, semi, post, non, inter, mono, sup.*
8. *Mark diacritically and divide into syllables the following, and name the sign that indicates the sound: card, ball, mercy, sir, odd, cell, rise, blood, fare, last.*
9. *Use the following correctly in sentences: cite, site, sight, fane, fain, feign, vane, vain, vein, raze, raise, rays.*
10. *Write 10 words frequently mispronounced and indicate pronunciation by use of diacritical*

marks and by syllabication.

Geography (Time, one hour)

- 1. What is climate? Upon what does climate depend?*
- 2. How do you account for the extremes of climate in Kansas ?*
- 3. Of what use are rivers? Of what use is the ocean?*
- 4. Describe the mountains of North America*
- 5. Name and describe the following:
Monrovia, Odessa, Denver, Manitoba, Hecla,
Yukon, St. Helena, Juan Fernandez, Aspinwall,
and Orinoco.*
- 6. Name and locate the principal trade centers of the U.S. Name all the republics of Europe and give the capital of each.*
- 8. Why is the Atlantic Coast colder than the Pacific in the same latitude?*
- 9. Describe the process by which the water of the ocean returns to the sources of rivers.*
- 10. Describe the movements of the earth. Give the inclination of the earth.*

Notice that the exam took FIVE HOURS to complete.

Of course, since many of these questions are irrelevant today, we could hardly be expected to have been taught how to answer them. But keep this test in mind when you are proud of your IQ test score or your college degree; these too, are based heavily upon the needs of culture, not just your ability to think or pass tests. And as much as we today value a college degree, we must remember that there are still vital positions within our society that can be done by people with an eighth grade education; and the fact that education may not be a

fundamental requirement, **a job that is vital is no less valuable to society, and should not provide less of a reward** to the worker who does it.

Sadly, not everyone enjoyed even an eighth grade education in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Child labor was a necessity for some, and children as young as 6 or 7 often had jobs, *if only* selling newspapers. Lewis Hines took photos to document this phenomenon, because:

"There is work that profits children, and there is work that brings profit only to employers. The object of employing children is not to train them, but to get high profits from their work."

Lewis Hine, 1908

Factory wages were so low that children often had to work to help support their families. The number of children under the age of 15 who worked in industrial jobs for wages climbed from 1.5 million in 1890 to 2 million in 1910. Businesses liked to hire children because they worked in unskilled jobs for lower wages than adults, and their small hands made them more adept at handling small parts and tools²⁵. Here are two of Mr. Hines's photos documenting child labor:

²⁵ From <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hine-photos/>



Glass Blower and Mold Boy, Grafton, WV
October 1908



Nine-Year Old Newsgirl, Hartford, CT
March 6, 1909

Here is a *modern* test for you²⁶. How well can you do answering these questions? Better yet, imagine a ***Citizenship Curriculum*** inviting debate, research, writing, reading, and more, around questions that are relevant for this moment:

“What are schools for? Who decides? What do people learn in school besides reading, writing, and arithmetic? What do they learn about other societies? About jobs? About race and racism²⁷? About democracy? About government? About economics?

“Are all public schools the same? What are the differences? Where do the differences come from? Who decides? What is the cost of education? How are schools funded? Are schools fairly funded? How do you know?

“What is academic success? Who decides? What is standardized testing? Is it fair? How do you know? How big is the testing business? Has it always been this way? Who profits? “What is history? Who makes history? Is history being made today? By whom? Who else?

“How many prisons are there in Mississippi? In Illinois? Who does time, and for what crimes? How much money goes into incarceration, and how much into education? Who decides? Where is the nearest prison or jail? Are prisoners allowed to vote? Why or why not?

“Where is the Mississippi Delta in relation to Chicago? Is there a link? Where are Chicago and the Delta region in relation to Mexico City,

²⁶ from “*Race Course*” by Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn

²⁷ Racism, meaning giving advantage to one’s own race when your interests clash with those of a different race

Caracas, Ha Noi, Panama, Montreal, New York City, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Cape Town? Is there a link?

“Who said, “No black man should go 10,000 miles away to fight for a so-called freedom he doesn’t enjoy in Mississippi”? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

“Is our country at war? When did it begin? Who is the enemy? What are the objectives? When will it end?

“What youth gangs exist in our community? What appeals to kids about gangs? What are some things gangs offer that are okay? What things are destructive and harmful to the participant and to the larger community?

“What makes you an American? Who decides? If someone questioned your right to call yourself American, what story would you offer as proof? What image, object, or document could you produce that would be persuasive?

“It is hard to stop writing questions – one thing leads to another. And once we take a step into this kind of curriculum and teaching ***we recognize that power is hidden in every question, and that everything is connected if we pursue it deeply enough.***”
[emphasis added]

Did you do better on this one? More to the point, did it make you think about **what** is actually happening today, **who** is doing it, and **why**?

Our new modern worldview, which is less than 150 years old, is based on the concept that we are each separate individuals capable of judgment and action,

independent of our surroundings. We gained an illusion of control as we used machines to shape our world, with the resulting bias that we could someday control it completely. As we used mechanical methods to leverage our own limited strength, we also transformed our economic system into one that leveraged our future ability to work for access to goods and services today: in other words, we made debt the basis for our money and hence our ability to trade with one another. We need growth in our economy for there to be enough money to service debt. While there are instances where nature allows for exponential growth; in a forest following a fire, for instance, or during certain stages of a child's growth, unrestrained and perpetual growth is commonly called a *cancer* and is anathema to the continued existence of the host. Certainly we are not advocating that America turn back the clock to the 1870's. That is impossible and unwarranted. And the old story, although it was not as powerful then as the one we have now, was still the foundation of our society. Religions played a much stronger role in indoctrinating the population to respect authority and serve as good citizens then; today science has taken over that role in the lives of many. Yet even science is incomplete, and offers us a worldview that is changing as each generation adds to the existing research and development of the ideas at its core. It is incomplete in that, while it can use the observed effects of gravity to get men safely to the Moon and back, it can't explain how gravity works. It teaches that DNA is the blueprint upon which our life is built, and even that we are destined from birth to expect certain outcomes because of this cellular programming; yet research shows more and more that the environment, and even our minds, have more to do with what happens to us than our DNA, through a mechanism dubbed *epigenetics*. It is like saying that

there are blueprints for a building, yet the actual form the building takes is dependent upon the whims and changes instituted by the builder as he constructs it. Science still hasn't explained the placebo effect, or even recognized it as useful. Modern pharmaceutical companies find it increasingly difficult to fashion drugs that are more effective than sugar pills, but when will we instead examine the mind-body connection to find effective treatments not dependent upon sales of magical pill?

As just one example of epigenetics at work, scientists have found that setting size limits for fish (throwing back the small ones) has led to their **rapid** evolution: in the Gulf of St Lawrence in eastern Canada, the average length of 6-year-old cod has decreased from 21.5 inches in the 1970s to 18.2 inches today. A recent analysis of 37 fish stocks found most matured earlier and smaller than in even the recent past. It is hard to understand exactly how the fish have figured out that they must grow smaller! Does this new concept also apply to humans? Robert Fogel, in his book "*The Changing Body*" writes:

"The health and nutrition of one generation contributes, through mothers and through infant and childhood experience, to the strength, health, and longevity of the next generation: at the same time, increased health and longevity enable members of the next generation to work harder and longer to create resources which can then be used, in turn, to assist the next, and succeeding, generations to prosper."

Thus, if our health and longevity increase as our resources increase, technology impacts genetics much as agriculture and sanitation and antibiotics did. Counter that, though, with the knowledge that technology also comes with toxic side-effects, which might work against our health and long life.

This notion of epigenetics also opens the door to understanding a huge dilemma: are we the fulfillment of the destiny outlined in our genes, or the product of our lifetime of experience? Can we **consciously** overcome our cells' programming and manifest a future that exposes the least likely possibility, not the most likely? Can we consciously program, and then manifest, a completely new and different story about our place in the Universe? Many believe that we can. What would your new story create?

Please take a moment to ponder the difference between the Primal Way of Life with life in the 1870's. Once we began to settle in cities, we were forced to deal with the waste that our lifestyle invariably generates, we couldn't just move into the next valley and let rot take its course. We have to bring our food and water to us, rather than going to wherever it is. We also find the what food is naturally occurring in our environment is not enough for our exploding population; and so we have to develop methods of increasing the amount of nutrients we take out of Nature in the form of plants to eat. That may mean trade, or it may mean war, or it may mean using fertilizers and pesticides that are toxic to some forms of life. And we begin to meddle with killing insects, and pulling *weeds*, in a desperate attempt to *control* an ecosystem in order to maximize our own harvest. In cities we have a buffer (the building we sleep in, and other buildings and streets) between ourselves and the *wild*. In cities we specialize, rather than becoming accomplished at all skills; and once we bring money in whatever form into the equation, we also add power and class. The Lord of the Manor certainly did not go about the home lighting the multitude of candles, nor did he care one whit about how the laundry got done. The business's bookkeeper could hardly be expected to draw up the plans for the bridge, his task was to make

sure that the workers were not paid one penny more than they were due (and less than that even, if at all possible).

In a similar fashion, what could we say about life today in America?

- We feel very disconnected and insecure. Between fear of crime in our neighborhood, driven supposedly and according to mainstream media by drug-crazed minorities, and fear of another terrorist attack, used as cover for all kinds of unconstitutional behavior by government and its contractors, we are enticed into giving up our freedom in the name of safety. Yet the *security theater* we endure every time we pass through an airport does little to enhance our safety, and mandatory, punitive, and harsh drug sentencing laws disrupt families, steal fathers from their children, and ultimately do more harm to our neighborhood than the original drug offenses could ever have done. We spend more time at work, those of us with jobs anyway, than ever before despite the fact that technology **could** give us more creative and fulfilling leisure time. And being away from our family so much, and falling into the social media morass where one can sign an online petition against clubbing seals and feel like enough has been done to solve the world's problems, we feel increasingly isolated and alone and yet can't quite manage to pin the blame where it belongs: the meme propagated by mainstream media that we are only responsible for our own actions, and that we owe nothing to society because we succeed or fail based upon our own efforts. It is a caricature to be sure, but the idea that family members would text the question, "What's for dinner?" to someone sitting

on the other side of the room rather than speak out loud is a sad sign of our times.

- Our acceptance of immoral behavior has never been greater. From what can only be called rampant, systemic fraud in financial institutions, to manipulated markets in nearly every economic sector, to government officials blatantly lying to Congress and the people without remorse or punishment, to most students cheating in school to some degree, to companies marketing GMOs and other products containing new and untested chemicals that they merely *claim* are *safe*, to people fudging figures on their tax filings, and all the way to government using the stamp of *national security* to hide death squads, renditions, and courts so secret that even mentioning their existence is a crime, our society has devolved from one focused on truth to one that lives only in lies and deceit. On a personal level, we deny the results of what we sow: that our own willingness to lie to others about what we want, who we are, and what we plan to do is only being reflected back to us as we see the decay of morality around us. We are in more denial about the truth of what is happening than ever before; else there would be a general strike, a mass boycott of everything capitalistic, and a 100 million person march on the institutions of power that have fostered this climate of lies.
- There is another type of denial that hurts us: when we in the West design our military policies in Afghanistan for instance, as if every Afghan citizen is literate, as if sending girls to school is what everyone wants, as if the Taliban wears an

emblem or a uniform making them an identifiable foe who can easily be killed or jailed, as if all you have to do to get gasoline for your police vehicle is pull into a gas station, as if everyone is content to wait for the next election if they don't like this new government's policies, just like in America. We deny not only the reality that makes our decisions dysfunctional, but we deny that we have to take the opinions, needs, culture, and resources of those we claim to want to help into account. We fail to understand that not every can be like us, nor does everyone want to.

- We are so far removed from the actual creation of our food, shelter, and peace of mind that we no longer understand what is important and what is not. We think our food comes to us from the supermarket; and will defend to the death our right to continue to get our food there. We think that we have a *right to own* our home, that renting is just throwing away money, without defending the right to have shelter or examining the benefits of land being held in common rather than by private parties. We think that our peace of mind comes from Sunday morning worship, and again, will do anything to maintain that illusion. We accept that our life might well be spent answering questions customers raise because a manual is poorly written, or stamping *approved* on an endless series of paperwork, all under the guise of this being work that benefits society by keeping the wheels of commerce or government turning. We have turned our backs on the notion that the most useful skill we can learn and teach to our children is one of being connected and integrated

into our environment. As we specialize our skills we become ever more dependent upon the importation of resources from somewhere else into our dense and compact cities, often at the expense of those whose life is being taken over to generate those resources.

- We continue to fight each other over the left/right paradigm, the Republican/Democrat *choices* we are allowed every election cycle, without seeing that divide-and-conquer is the most fundamental and basic tool of control ever imagined. We think that voting is a responsibility not to be shirked; and yet, as nearly all the money candidates get to run their campaigns comes from corporations and not from individuals, we choose to stay blind to the fact that voters have no say over what laws will or won't be passed. I can't fault the politician who toes the company line; after all, he hopes to get more money for the next election, right? But just like in those "Miss County Fair" pageants, we might as well let candidates collect funds, turn those funds over to the government, and let the person who collects the most win the seat without the expense and bother of making people go to the polls. Surely the outcome in terms of legislation would be the same. But the burden of proof is not upon those of us who want to change the system, to show beyond doubt that our ideas can actually work in practice; rather the burden lies upon those in power to show that their system **can work for us**. Since that's impossible, we should first of all stop reproducing this system that exploits us. And so we don't vote and we don't run for office. **Especially**, as long as corporate money is

allowed to influence elections or even legislation. I will vote only when I see a box on the ballot marked: “Total revolution of consciousness and our entire social, political and economic system”. I fear I will be waiting a long, long time.

- Despite all of the problems with lying, we continue to *trust* those we have endowed with authority to use their power over us to control and manipulate us. We ignore the benefits of solidarity, power from within, and power granted and the chance we have, by using these three forms of power, to make our own decisions as a community rather than be ruled by tyranny.
- Although the gender wars have been fought since forever it seems, we still have a male-dominated society that prizes strength and domination over intuition and nurturing. We have established an economy that values the work of men: primarily the production of goods to trade and providing services to facilitate that trade, and manufacturing and using weapons of war. We do not value the traditional work of women: nurturing families and communities and caring for those unable to care for themselves. We focus on hunting the *phantom* wealth that arises from hoarding *surplus money* or formerly community-owned resources and assets, rather than on nurturing the *real* wealth of healthy families, healthy communities, and healthy environments. We allow rampant and widespread violence against women to continue *as if it were natural* and not a construct of *power over*.
- Thirty years into the Information Revolution, we use more paper than ever before. Technology

holds the promise of relieving us of the drudgery of manual, mechanical labor. Today only about 15% of all workers work in the occupations that sustain life: food, water, shelter, and energy. The rest of our work is on creative endeavors that we hope will advance society, on projects designed to make money for money's sake, or as make-work to keep people off the government support rolls. Is it time to rethink what it means to work? If everyone received a living wage, pay that is sufficient to support a family on one income, might we find that the benefits in terms of happiness and compassion increase the overall health of our communities? Or if everyone received a minimum amount meant to cover the bare minimum of survival needs without having to work, wouldn't we find that the time freed up for creativity and connection also builds happiness and compassion into our world? And why is it after all, that we adhere to the belief that one must fulfill a very narrow definition of *work*, a definition that currently does not count caring for one's aging parents or sick children, in order to be paid the wages needed just to survive? Already today we find ourselves doing *work* for free that to earn a wage: we pump our own gas, check out our own grocery baskets and books from the library, we assemble our own furniture, research and purchase our flights and hotels and insurance online, check self-help websites instead of seeing our doctor, and use search engines to find answers so we can repair all manner of items ourselves. This definition of labor focuses on its **exchange value**; an alternative view would highlight its **use value** to our society instead. This would

enable us to reward everyone with a minimum wage, grateful they are alive and contributing their energy and creativity to our culture, and not merely the sweat from their brow.

- Our electronic gadgets have opened a path for the government to keep a close eye on all of our travels and communications. Many activists worry, and rightly so, that this information might someday be used to repress or persecute them; this is the foundation of the anger over the extensive surveillance revealed to us by whistleblowers since at least 2005. We may trust the current Administration, but we can't know who will be allowed to wield this power in the future. In a Primal world where there is no government, only your own tribe to worry about, privacy is not an issue to protect. In today's modern world, where information is power and there is a formidable power who would like to oppress larger and larger swathes of our population, then it is a huge concern.
- The food we eat today contains, according to some studies, 40% less nutrition than food grown 50 years ago at the start of the petroleum-fueled *green revolution*. If you are not shopping in a farmers' market or trading for food from the farm next door, then you are likely eating more oil than soil. Modern industrial agriculture, having the benefit of only needing 2% of the population to work the farms, relies instead upon the use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides, all derived from oil or natural gas. The growth of the use of these chemicals in our food can be traced by monitoring the growth of *dead zones* along

coastlines, as rivers carrying runoff from farms seeps into the ocean, releasing nitrogen that feeds large algae growths. The algae then consume all of the oxygen in the water, leading to the death of all marine life in the affected area. Several hundred dead zones have been documented. To use a different example, tomatoes are picked while still immature and green because they are more easily shipped, can be stored longer before spoiling, and are less prone to damage, than if they were allowed to ripen naturally on the vine. Gassing them with ethylene before sale turns them an appropriate shade of red; otherwise we would be unlikely to buy them. But this helps explain why their taste has devolved over the years, and why home-grown and eaten-right-off-the-vine tomatoes (and other vegetables and fruits) have so much more flavor. In so many ways, our food has taken on many less nutritious, less flavorful, and less healthy aspects since the start of the chemically-induced changes in our *modern* agricultural system. Other than fueling our exponential²⁸

²⁸ Let's be sure we understand *exponential*: Any number that increases at some percentage steadily over time is said to be exhibiting exponential growth. No matter the rate, the number will have doubled at some future time. For example, place 1 bacteria that spawns another bacteria, or doubles itself every minute, into a test tube. A full test tube happens after 60 minutes. At 55 minutes, the tube is *only 3% full*. At 59 minutes, we arrive at the "oh shit!" moment, but the tube is still *only half full* at this time. But even if technology manages in that last minute to create 3 new test tubes, 60 minutes = 1 full, 61 minutes = 2 full, and 62 minutes = *all 4 full*. Was all that work to make new tubes worth it? Is all that work even possible?

population growth, have we really gained anything from the so-called *Green Revolution*?

- And speaking of exponential population growth, in just my lifetime (58 years) the number of humans on Earth has gone from less than three billion, to more than 7 billion. This is problematic for many reasons, but chief among them is the need for resources. If all seven billion of us were to live like Americans, we would need *five Earths*. This is why as Americans we need to cut our use of resources: power, food, textiles, metals, chemicals, oil, and water by four-fifths; merely to get our consumption back to a level that can also be enjoyed by everyone alive today. Far from the sustainable and stable population that led Man to develop over tens of thousands of years, we are instead creating a host of problems in our environment that endanger our existence. Of course culture has a great part to play in whether our numbers rise or fall; and Americans are so full of pride that we can hardly be expected to merely maintain our family size at one child per person. We see nothing wrong with our consumptive patterns, with our exportation of military might and terror around the globe under the guise of being the world's sole superpower to guard our access to resources, or with our excessive use of those resources. We fail to see the tension that develops as people around the globe watch movies and television shows created here and shown everywhere, further demonstrating the disparities between American life and, say, life in Burma. A large factor in lowering birth rates everywhere is education: the

more schooling women receive, the fewer children they have. Knowledge gives one some sense of control over their life, and women choose the Primal way of having fewer children. What does it say about men when they do not allow women to go to school, or when they override the wished of the women and force them to have children they don't want? Another known reason birth rates fall is people migrating into cities from farms. If you don't need lots of hands to help with harvesting, you tend to have smaller families. And in a city you also build up relationships with others who might care for you as you age; another reason to not need so many offspring. And finally, the elephant in the room: religion. Here the well-known Catholic prohibition against the use of birth control comes to mind. Primal man, of course, had not experienced Christianity, and so was spared needing to answer the question, "Is breast-feeding a form of banned birth control?"

- Taken together, all of these comparisons between Primal and modern life point to one conclusion: to be sustainable, we are asked not, as our current mindset tells us, to try to increase our control over Nature. Instead, sustainability arises when we surrender to our environment: when we begin to blend into, and harmonize with, the totality of life that surrounds us. Is that possible, while maintaining at least enough of our technology to allow us to enjoy the essence of a good life, our creativity and service?

It appears that we live with more comfort than ever, since the advent of agriculture. But the problems we face indicate that we cannot sustain this lifestyle. Note that

agriculture drove our focus away from **being** and into **doing**. We had to plan and save seeds, and hack at our Mother Earth. Having performed so much work to get our food, we naturally want to **own** the crop and the land it grows on. We find we have weeds and vermin that lower our yield and cause us to begin to hate parts of Nature, when before we were at peace with all of life. We begin to discount what is free: rain, Sun, and soil, and to focus instead on our own **doing** as the source of our bounty. We began to make buildings, to shelter our bodies, our families, our tools and our harvested crops. This leads to accumulating **sunk costs** that tie us even deeper onto **our** land. Thus as Man's dominion grew: over the land where he grew **his** crops, over **his** domesticated animals²⁹ who labored to provide for him and his family, over the space enclosed by **his** house; so grew his need to **do** *and* his separation from his source, Nature. It is good to remember where we have come from: that is the point of looking at the Primal life, and life at the dawn of the age of oil, and then to compare both lifestyles to how we live today. The real question now is, "How can we change our life to become **as sustainable** as our Primal ancestors?"

Beginning to domesticate and grow crops meant that people settled into one particular place and naturally began to build shelters that were rooted to the land, and to enclose large storage spaces. But this led directly to

²⁹ Think of the change in worldview brought about by domesticating the horse: the rider looked down upon others for the first time; we learned to control something that was more powerful than ourselves; horses allowed faster and farther travel; horses carried far more than we could alone; and horses were a monumental advantage in battle. Ultimately the point is: now **we** ride our bodies like we ride horses; an ego that commands the body to do its bidding and to carry it around wherever it wants to go.

hoarding, greed, the concept of ownership, and a new notion of material wealth that had not existed in the Primal life that came before. Primal people could *own* only what they could carry as they moved their camp; and the idea of *ownership* was completely foreign. A hunter would bring back a large animal he had managed to run down over a week's chase, but he could hardly store the meat and create his own personal stash. Instead, he would share the bonanza with everyone in the tribe. The next day, maybe someone would stumble onto a fruitful berry patch and they too would share with all. In this way, gifting all excess to others, people built up a reserve of goodwill that would see them through the tough times when the hunter's luck was not so good, when the forager might fall ill and be unable to gather food, or when caring for another who was ill might take all of one's time. In many cultures, gifting was a way to gain status explicitly. Everything is a *commons*, meant to be shared, when no one owns the land. And by what concept is it possible to *own* land? Today all land is *owned* under our current system, and so it is traded or inherited or gifted from one to another. But how is it that the first person came to hold claim over the property? From whom did that first person acquire the property? It had to be by confiscating land that had *belonged* to a community that saw it, and treated it, as only *the world in which they lived*. American minds have a difficult time with this idea of a commons. To some degree, it may be the imprint of the similar word *communist*, which has been such a negative concept in our culture, and one that reeks of hatred and revulsion so deeply that it can hardly be mentioned in public. But also I feel that the lifestyle inherent in any Primal culture is seen as being *wild* or *primitive*; and we don't want to end up having to live *outside*, whether that means outside in the open air, or outside of the

accepted norms of our society. When the American natives were being forced onto reservations and given a single acre of land that they were told was their own, this idea of land ownership was completely foreign to them. No tribe felt that it *owned* land, and they had survived for thousands of years by blending into the land, learning from the land, speaking to the land, and taking what was needed for survival from the land. They knew when and where berries would be in season; when and where the fish would migrate and spawn, when and where it was easiest to hunt big game, and they would go there and harvest what was needed for their tribe. To be told, "Here is your acre, and you cannot take anything from anyone else's property!" was a brand new concept, one that they hadn't processed as a culture, one that they didn't have any perspective on to know the problems it would present. Very soon however, it was clear that their Primal culture and lifestyle had taken a body blow and were destined to collapse. They could not feed themselves using the techniques evolved over hundreds of generations; they were set adrift into uncharted waters without a map. We teach our children about the native peoples that *sold* Manhattan Island to the ~~invaders~~ settlers for \$24 worth of beads; we fail to teach our children that from the natives' perspective, they weren't selling anything, because they didn't *own* that land. They thought the settlers were gifting them with beads, unaware of the motives of the new folk and unable to agree to selling land even if they knew the implications of accepting the beads.

Also, having buildings and beginning to store what you gathered, killed, or managed to grow in your garden, meant that there began to be a class structure. There were those who went hunting instead of hoeing; and hunting often ends with empty bellies. Those who grew and stored food then felt justified to *charge* those who

were hungry in order to have something to eat, under the guise of having *worked harder* in order to have food to share. And the moment some people had access to more resources by *owning* food and storage buildings, we have the beginnings of a class-based society. People began to specialize: some as hunters only, some as farmers only, some as tool-makers, and some as entertainers. That furthered the tendency humans seem to have to judge how much *work* others are doing, and to find one's place in the hierarchy of society: in other words, to find one's class and to denigrate the classes that are lower than one's own. Even children suffered a great loss during this transition from hunter-gatherer to farmer: they were no longer carried around and held by someone for their first several years of life, no longer given the strong signal that they were deeply connected to family and tribe; rather they were left to entertain themselves in pens constructed solely so that (typically) their mother could go about the business of farming, using tools and bending over and such, without also carrying the little one. Breast feeding ended much sooner in the child's life, and as you might imagine, population began to grow exponentially. This growth in population was not unwelcome: it was useful to have lots of hands to help with the back-breaking work of farming.

The switch to farming also brought with it the problems caused when land is overused. Of course, at first, there were few issues other than having to walk a little farther to find good, virgin land for growing. But soon enough, rather than abandon the *buildings already constructed* (code for wealth, a mindset often referred to by economists as *sunk costs*), it became the practice to gather the hunters and let them *hunt* for fertile ground being used by other folk. And here we learn war, a battle over resources, and a trend that continues to this day.

No city can sustain itself without importing food and water from someone else's land; and those other people aren't always amenable to trading away their own supplies. Primal societies had few possessions, but **they were not poor**. What is the real wealth that brings you your greatest happiness and satisfaction? Is it the latest new gadget, or is it the profound relationship you have with your loving partner? Primal people had a relationship not just with others in their group, but also with the entire system within which they lived. Not having *possessions* that they controlled, there was no concept of riches vs. poverty and no consequences of being unable to work. Poverty, or the inability to marshal the resources needed for success (or often even survival), grows in equal portion during the rise of our modern separation from the world. Agrarian peasants have been more likely to suffer than the members of a primal tribe who are unable, or even unwilling, to *work*. There is great anguish and struggle today as factions fight over if and how those who are less well-resourced will receive assistance from those who have more than they need. This struggle is often disguised, full of slander and innuendo and discrimination and outright racism or classism. But trying to work out details of a social safety net that meets everyone's needs fails to see or address the underlying causes, the roots of the issue: the evolution of a dysfunctional system of property rights and changes in our approach to sharing what the world makes available to us.

GOT LAND? THANK AN INDIAN!

People often assert that in this system, it's all about individual rights, and individual property and what one does with what one owns. But that is just a way of saying that property has intrinsic value; that property can

control someone; and both ideas are dangerously false. By ceding one's authority or power to property, we are actually saying we will only do as much as our property allows when it comes to using our resources to help others, to feed and clothe and shelter those without similar access to property. We will use our resources until we judge we have given away *enough*, then we return to the ways things are. There is no room in this view for fundamental challenge to the structure of society; because why would property give up its dominant position in the values hierarchy? Realize that property is at the root of capitalism; as long as we leave its role and its contribution to real wealth off the table, we can have no discussion that will make the changes we need to avoid ever-increasing inequities.

We see a similar limiting of discussion in many aspects of our world today. We are told while negotiating the health care changes in 2009 and 2010 that, "...all options are on the table" except that changing health care from profit (accumulation of resources and property) to not-for-profit was never a viable option. We hear that regarding any other nation who is *threatening* to us, "...all options are on the table" except that how property contributes to the desire for global hegemony is not up for discussion. And understand: having property under the current system is even better than having money. If I have no property and you do, I have to come to you to get the money I need to survive; often by working at your command, sometimes by begging for you to pay taxes so that the government can redistribute your money to me as my sustenance. I become your slave. This is why every generation struggles to control poverty: because without property a person is unable to set the terms by which they can live. Property dictates the conditions under

which you live, by whether or not you have *enough* of it.

Many people, especially Americans, immediately think this discussion about property is about the model of *Communism* that was practiced in the latter half of the arc of Soviet Russia, especially during the Cold War. This is problematic for many reasons:

- We view communism as one entity when there actually is a communist political theory, and a communist economic theory, and every *communist* system addresses these theories in unique ways. Witness China today as it attempts to blend a communist political system with capitalist economic ideas.
- The USSR was really *Communist* in name only; politically it was much more like a dictatorship, and economically it was a centrally-planned economy.
- Our views of life there under communism are necessarily heavily distorted due to the war propaganda that was put out both by the American government attacking the communist political theory as America defined it, and American business attacking the communist economic theory as America defined it.
- Many of the resources, in **both** countries, that might otherwise have been used to feed people were instead poured into weapons development and militarization.
- We were taught to hold the communist *regime* in contempt because it resorted to police repression, violence, and surveillance to maintain control of its population. Funny how the world revolves!

Now, as a thought experiment, let's substitute democracy and capitalism for communism and look at America today:

- We view our system as one of *freedom* and democracy, when actually we have a plutocracy (government by the rich few), and an economy that has evolved into some aberration often referred to as *crony capitalism*.
- America is a *democracy* in name only; by manipulating governments and economies and placing so many of the world's resources (property) into the hands of just a few people, those people are able to buy the influence needed to make elections moot and to lobby lawmakers so intensely that most don't even read the legislation, often written by the lobbyists and corporations themselves, that they vote on. Business controls most media to such an extent that there can be no discussion about reforming or changing the system. Our views of our own lives are so heavily warped by media that we are living in a fantasy world and fail to realize it.
- We think our economy is capitalist; yet global corporations transcend national borders and laws and thus are able to manipulate markets, the antithesis of any *free market* as required by capitalism. Every so-called *free trade agreement* is not about free trade, rather it is about allowing corporations to bypass local or national laws aimed at curbing pollution and worker abuse, and restrictions that limit profits. Bottom line: while we tell ourselves and each other that we live under one theoretical set of systems, we actually live under quite another, more repressive, one.

- Many of our resources that we might otherwise use to feed people are instead poured into weapons development and militarization and waging global war.
- We are awakening to how much we are being subjected to police repression, violence, and surveillance to maintain control of us. Of course, because of the medias' propaganda and deeply entrenched biases that allow many to remain in blissful denial, this repression has been going on here since the first colonists landed on the Eastern shores 400 years ago. Still, it is encouraging that it is now the subject of water cooler debate.

This need to have property, or money, in order to survive is clear when you note how much of our life has been converted to private ownership: transportation (my own car), health care (must have insurance), child care (must pay for a provider so that I can work rather than care for my children), food (must buy food wrapped in plastic or cardboard or tin or Styrofoam from stores or restaurants), entertainment (must pay for cable/satellite or internet or movies at a theater), must pay rent or mortgage (to have space twice as large as is 1970, which is still not large enough for my family and all of our stuff so we rent storage space, or a little house for our plastic junk that we will never use again), water (in a plastic bottle, less regulated for safety than tap water, but giving the *illusion* that it is better for me)... the list goes on a long ways more. By sharing these goods and services as we used to, or through some form of subsidy, the pressure on both parents to work would be far less, our families would be much more relaxed, we'd have fewer arguments over money that sour our personal

relationships, we'd have more time to enjoy life and be creative and care for one another. Is it such a bad thing to want these results? It is clear that our current system will not be providing them. Bottom line on this paragraph: people should not have to work just to survive. Yes, we can work to improve our lot, to enrich society, to care for others. But demanding that we spend most of our waking hours focusing on **earning** the basics of food and shelter is a clear symptom of a dysfunctional system for maintaining and distributing what Nature can provide. With today's technology, we are capable of making sure that ***everyone can survive; that food and water and shelter are not something that requires work or payment.*** What you decide to do with your life after that point should be up to you and your family. This bounty comes from the Earth, not from Man. No human makes water, or air, or seeds from which life springs. This is our birthright. Of course, to get to any system that manifests this deep understanding, we must transcend the fear that some will get by without working; and some very valid questions are: where does that fear come from? Who put that thought into your mind, and why? Where is the proof; who got to decide that?

Another aspect of why people find this kind of **communal** sharing abhorrent comes down to this: **we** want to believe that we are better than **those people**. Who would clean the toilets, if no one has to work for a living? What we miss here is that just as everyone deserves what they need to survive, we all have to understand that we are part of a society, equal beings, and we have a responsibility to clean up after ourselves. Others may offer to help you hold up your end, but to **require** that everyone work is convenient if what you really want is to have power over others, and to be able to command others to do jobs that you yourself find

distasteful. What we see today is what happens when this dynamic of paying others to do despicable things on our behalf gets into its latter stages and approaches collapse because of its own rotten foundation.

To address these issues, we must look at some key questions:

- Why are we sometimes upset when others work less than we do? When the work we must do in order to have food to eat is dependent upon outside forces; weather for example, does it change how we feel about those who, because of bad luck, haven't enough to eat? Why do we fear that someone might try to get by without working? What is it that we fear we will lose in this situation? Is it different if someone cannot work because of illness? Or because of permanent disability caused by an accident, or a genetic health issue? What if someone performs tasks that are not labeled *work*, like caring for a youngster who is ill: is that enough to qualify to be fed by the group, for free? Is it intrinsically better that someone work to care for a relative, or an orphan who is not related to them? If it matters, why? If it doesn't matter, why not? And what if my talents or gifts mean that I can sing beautiful music, but that I suck as a hunter? Should I therefore be doomed to always being hungry?
- Can we acknowledge also that people who need public assistance: unemployment benefits, welfare, food stamps, disability, and more; can't just *lay around all day*? They have to fill out

applications³⁰ and travel long distances or wait in long lines for interviews and to *get qualified* in order to receive this help. They often go from the welfare office to the food pantry, from the county hospital to 12-step meetings, from the housing authority to the clothes closet, from the free clinic to the legal aid office. They apply for free school lunches, Thanksgiving turkeys, gifts for their children at Christmas, and the back-to-school backpacks program. They may be required to attend parenting classes, resume-writing classes, job-readiness classes, or independent living classes. **They are not lazy, they are resource-poor.** If we want to examine people who get something without having to work for it, we must focus on those who have wealth from inheritance, from interest, dividends, and capital gains, and from rents received.

- When is *enough*, enough? By placing an emphasis on consumption and accumulation (which we do in order to live a third of our lives without working, especially in retirement), can we recognize how our hoarding may cause others to lack what they need even for survival? Today we produce goods and offer services both for their use value and for their exchange value. What would it mean to have an economy based only on use value: what if there is no value placed on exchange, such as through a total gift economy? What about goods or assets produced by robots; is that a new kind of property? Should it be valued differently since human labor is not a

³⁰ Often prior to receiving **each and every** benefit, week after week, month after month

substantive ingredient in its manufacture, since there is no meaningful cost of labor? And what about a different sort of poverty: the poverty of spirit that arises when we have enough but don't know it? How can we help these poor people?

- Why must every modern economy *maximize* production? Can an economy be designed that maximizes life or happiness and gratitude or spiritual development instead?
- Is it acceptable that our modern economy require access to some amount of capital in order to succeed? How do we feel when our ancestors, due to racial or class distinctions that prohibited them from owning property, were unable to provide us with a large inheritance of capital to further our ability to succeed? How should we feel when others have that capital, by inheritance rather than work, and thus have more power and luxury than we can ever hope to acquire merely by the luck of birth?

Before oil, man died of unknown causes and of extreme nature. Now we know *more* (but not all) of why we die – and build shelters to protect us from *more* (but not all) weather extremes. But these walls: built high and deep, and inside our minds and hearts as well as outside in the world, also separate us from Nature and each other; both aspects of life of which we need to be intimately aware because we are intimately related. We have come to believe that knowledge is power and that it leaves us in control. We are wrong. And every time someone dies in an accident, or from cancer, or is lost at sea we are reminded that Nature will always have its way in the end, according to its laws, regardless of how much we try to change the outcome.

Tapping the incredible power of fossilized sunlight, through the use of coal, oil, and natural gas, has increased the amount and reach of goods and services, every society's productivity and specialization, and a freedom from the whims of weather our grandparents could only dream of. As we have learned to exploit these resources, the structures of society: political, economic, social control, and property have all undergone incredible evolution. These changes, some we enjoy and some not so desirable, began first affecting small groups and states, but now they tragically shape relations between powerful nations with global reach. As I write this in late-2013, one public discussion centers on if and how we should enforce a *social norm* against the use of chemical weapons. Those in favor of action argue for exacting a punishment for the use of banned weapons, claiming that if we allow the use of these agents, we are condoning mass, indiscriminate, civilian murder. This is a grave concern in an age where the rogue use of nuclear weapons in a terror attack is an increasing worry as nuclear-capable nations become unstable (Pakistan in particular, but others as well). Those against any action point to two issues: first, that there remains at this point no conclusive proof of who actually used the chemicals, and second that those doing the punishing, particularly if that is primarily America, are guilty of hypocrisy at best and war crimes of our own at worst. This argument questions if we have the **moral capital** to be outraged, or if this reaction to a supposed strike by the Syrian regime against its own people is really more about a selfish, *holier-than-thou* motive. But this highlights one aspect of the dilemmas we face today: it is difficult to hold opposing viewpoints in mind together, and to find ways to address the concerns of all. When we are powerful, our actions have powerful implications.

For centuries, we have lived in a culture that believes Man is inherently selfish, out to meet only his own needs, deeply attached to competition rather than cooperation, and willing to live by a code summarized in the phrase, “Nature, red in tooth and claw”. Most of our social structures reflect this worldview: top-down hierarchies throughout our organizations, democracy in our political system but not in the workplaces where we spend the bulk of our time, a brutal and punitive justice system even for crimes that stem from medical or psychological issues (like drug *crimes*), a reliance upon strong government control in order for it to take care of our needs by funding our retirement and social *safety net* so that we don’t have to cooperate with our neighbors much, our creation of a marketplace for *conspicuous consumption* where we can use our purchases as status symbols as we compete with our neighbors to be the most *successful* person in our community, and a belief in *free* markets where the best corporate competitor can drive the competition for market share out of business. We compete when we take tests at school, compete for raises and promotions at work, and we even try to contribute more than other people in our church.

Agriculture fostered the growth of our human population; and as it also required us to set down roots and give up the nomadic life, it led to the growth of cities and eventually to nation-states that spread influence around the globe. For many decades, beginning in the 1800s and continuing into the 20th century, Great Britain was the world’s great power. It leveraged its own source of energy, coal, to fuel manufacturing better and more abundant products than any other nation. It used the fuel to drive warships around the globe, protecting its supply lines and exports. But the energy source was extremely dirty; the soot and gases caused health

problems, it didn't contain as much energy as the coal in America for instance, and eventually it was used up. The decline in energy meant that Great Britain could no longer rule the waves, nor could its manufacturing and export business remain number one in the world. That title was taken over by America, driven by its own energy ~~madness~~ boom: oil. Particularly after World War II, when the suburbs and the automobile combined to foster the American Dream of a house with a white picket fence and 2.4 kids, the domestic energy supply allowed this country to replace Great Britain as the world's powerhouse. We designed our towns to be *auto friendly*; public transport or walking is *decidedly not* part of the Dream. And living in houses that require lots of heating and cooling, and that we fill with food and stuff that comes from hundreds or thousands of miles away because transportation is cheap, ***we chose*** to live in an unsustainable way that fails to make us happy. This lifestyle was not mandatory, but it did follow the lead of a society rooted in exploitation and an economy rooted in debt for profit, environment be damned. It followed that emerging from WWII and being locked in a Cold War with the USSR just meant that in addition to its powerful emphasis on manufacturing and exports, America needed to spend lots of its resources on developing powered military vehicles, planes and tanks, and lots of its brain power on advancing the science of nuclear weapons. America had the advantage, too, of its currency being used around the globe for trade. The reserve currency status meant that other nations had to trade with the U.S., a situation that further fueled exports, while keeping imports relatively cheap. But as all good things must come to an end, America is now beset with a few issues that challenge its global dominance: the pollution from burning oil, and from the use of oil byproducts in our industrial food system,

threaten our environment. The military build-up that was fostered in mid-century via the Cold War has flooded the Earth with weapons, including many that are extremely problematic: chemical agents like Agent Orange or sarin gas, white phosphorous and cluster bombs, nuclear bombs as were used in Japan in August, 1945, and the depleted uranium munitions spread widely throughout Iraq. The excessive borrowing and consumption fueled by radical trade imbalances, ensured by the dollar's reserve currency status, threatens to bring down the global economy at any moment. Over the last half of the 20th century, our manufacturing industry fled the country looking for cheaper labor pools, the change in climate engendered by burning fossil fuels for commuting, farming, and in military vehicles is a global catastrophe, and the demands placed on American blood and treasure in order to maintain global hegemony and protect our exports and supply lines all have led us to a tipping point: without radical, transformative change, Nature's standard operating procedure will pass along global dominance to a new and different culture in the coming decade or two. How will we cope with our loss of status, with the crumbling of our Empire, with our demotion to the backwoods after being so accustomed to holding the office of global Sheriff?

I can hear some of my readers now: "Hasn't he heard? America will be energy independent, a leading exporter of oil in just a few more years...that will allow our continued dominance on the world stage!" If it were only so. Borne on the dreams of the Third Age of Carbon, we are being sold on a hope that has no possible chance of success. We see what happened with the First Age: coal. While coal is still around today, it is not used for transportation and it remains dirtier to burn than conventional oil. We are seeing what will happen to the

Second Age: oil. The easy pickings, the low-hanging fruit if you will, are quickly running out. No large, *easy to tap* fields have been discovered since the 1970s; every bit of new oil that has come to production since then has been in harder to reach places: under miles of rock, under miles of water, and sometime under miles of both. This is not only environmentally more risky, but also more costly, in terms of both money and energy. New wells that began to produce in 2012 cost an average of \$92 per barrel; up from just \$25 ten years ago. Many people misunderstand the *Peak Oil* problem: they think that those who bring up the subject think that we will run out of oil. That is not true; the peak oil theory posits that there comes a time in any extractive process when **production** peaks. This means that supply begins to decline, no matter what you do to increase it. If your economy is driven by supply and demand, only one of two things will happen in that case: the price will climb, and climb forever, or someone will go to war against those who have the remaining supply, in order to take it from them. We have been sheltered from worrying or remedying these harsh realities by the hype surrounding *Unconventional Fuels* and the distraction that most environmentalists have pushed for some time: renewable energies.

First the unconventional sources: primarily tar sands and shale gas and oil. The tar sands are just that: tar embedded in and tightly bound with, sand. If it is heated and treated with enough chemicals, the tar can be made into a form that can be burned in certain engines. It is not nearly as energy-packed, nor as clean, nor as easily burned as the oil our current American economy uses. This is why the Alberta tar sands will be shipped, if Big Oil has its way, through the Keystone XL pipeline from Canada to Houston, where it will be as refined as it can be and then shipped overseas, likely to China, where the

environmental regulations lag the U.S. by several decades. It is a shame, really, that Canada is spoiling so much of its water in order to heat and treat the tar sands, making the product fluid enough to get it to pass through the pipeline. That toxic remainder will hardly be the legacy they want to leave their grandchildren. But the product of tar sands is so poor it highlights the problem we must solve about oil today if we are to survive. In a metaphor, it is this: imagine that you stop by a neighborhood bar every evening on the way home from work for a few beers. One evening you enter the bar and are told by the bartender that the beer machine is broken, there is no beer tonight. Desperate for a drink, you tear up the carpet, squeezing it mightily over a glass, and manage to get a few swallows of beer even if it is disgusting, awful, and likely not healthy for you to drink. Tar sands prove that we are *that desperate*, that we will use anything that remotely acts like oil, rather than face the end of an era.

And for the renewables, there remain several issues despite decades of research. For one, over 90% of our transportation worldwide depends on *liquid* fuels. Electric cars might sound nice, but even we were to ban internal combustion engines from new cars and trucks tomorrow, it would still take more than a decade before even half of the vehicles on the roads do not burn oil derivatives. And if you are recharging that battery using a wall socket that gets *its power* from a coal-fired power plant, you are doing more harm to the environment than if you were still driving a gasoline-powered vehicle. This doesn't even get into the mining practices, including the use of toxic chemicals and mountaintop-removal methods, for extracting the special metals needed for the batteries, and so on. And while it sounds good to talk about disconnecting from the national grid and going local for wind and solar power, we still need oil for the

vehicles to extract the raw materials, manufacture the panels and the windmills and the batteries, and we need to deal with how to ramp down and then shut off that national grid itself. All of these issues take massive resources, both natural and monetary; these days any project that is resource-heavy may never be completed.

So how we got here is a long and sordid tale of sunk costs and opportunism: our forebears built a massive infrastructure that we are loath to abandon because we love our life of convenience, that our corporations are loath to abandon because it would mean a loss of profit for the company, and that our government is loath to abandon because it will mean a loss of power in our global society. We cannot fault those who came before us for tapping the amazing ability of oil to do work; if you had invented the internal combustion engine, you would have rushed it into production as well. But that doesn't get us off the hook today, now that we know the problems this lifestyle has wrought. It now becomes our task, not to invent new ways to tap oil and its energy, but to find ways to stop using oil for the betterment of our society, our environment, and our lifestyle. And we need to do this quickly!

Despite the propaganda that declares our greed and separate nature, science has recently brought forth studies that show the opposite is true: humans are actually wired to be altruistic, to want to share and to feel our greatest joy when giving to or caring for another. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics tells us that more than 60 million people volunteer to help others each year, just through organized volunteer groups, not counting those little acts of generosity and compassion that we do each and every hour. Working together can bring forth incredible awareness and energy and bliss, far greater than what we can experience while working

alone. It is only because we are steeped in a cultural belief in competition and possessions that we find it hard to comprehend life built on sharing; and yet, what brings *you* your greatest joy? Likely it comes from generosity, not competition, or from caring for another and not from caring only about yourself.

We are the first few generations who have been conditioned by an incredible sequence of wonders and marvels to expect *progress* to go on forever, and for the pace of that progress to continually speed up. Despite the fact that we were told technology would make life luxurious and carefree (which it hasn't) and that we would have lots more leisure time (which we don't), the latest iPad is not going to grow your food or power your heater or air conditioner or raise your children or care for your parents when they approach their death. We also have been allowed, through the manipulation of the media messages and control over what issues are acceptable to explore and discuss in public, to ignore one essential fact: whatever convenience we may gain through technology, someone somewhere pays a price. That may be in the loss of their land, their clean air or water, time with their family, their freedom, or their chance to be educated. This is the ultimate way we have become separate and disconnected. No one should have to die so that I can: have food to eat, have clothes to wear, can drive a car to get to work, have technology in my life, or have a home. And yet, as just one example, what is involved in making the clothes we wear? Cotton takes up 2.5% of our farmland, but accounts for 24% of agricultural chemical use; exposing workers and consumers to toxic products, if proper attention is not paid to procedures and safety. As many as 8,000 chemicals can be used to make one piece of clothing; and 1400 gallons of water for one pair of jeans or 800 gallons for a t-shirt. And in America, the

average life of a piece of clothing is six months; then it is thrown into a landfill in someone else's neighborhood or incinerated, polluting the air we breathe. In some parts of the world a lack of clean water kills people; but since we don't get a nightly count of the dead on our TV news, we don't think about it when we shop.

Is this the human condition then? To drift away from what our heart knows is right in order to try to stay safe; to live tame and small, unchallenged and unenlightened; and to stay locked away, hiding from any real experience, blocked from feeling emotion or connection by our need to limit our own personal suffering, even at the expense of others? Because I am locked behind walls of protection, I am blind to the ways I perpetuate injustice, the ways I hurt others with my choices and my consumption, the ways **I take my luxury for granted**. Recovering my sense of connection takes great awareness and effort. I focus every day: may I remind myself to pay attention, to spot those habits and beliefs that blind me to the cultural milieu that makes getting by at the expense of others seem almost natural?

Of course the real issue is this: any call for equality or democracy depends upon equitable distribution of resources; and that means cutting out 80% of American consumption of the world's resources³¹. Even cutting 10% will devastate and collapse our current economic system, and likely our political one as well. It is unbelievably scary to contemplate what the first months will look like, once the store shelves stop being replenished due to a shortage of oil for the trucks and planes that come from hundreds of miles away. More personally, are you ready to give up four out of five trips you now take in your car; four out of five of the shirts

³¹ Today, Americans, as 5% of the world's population, use 25% of its resources and generate 30% of its waste.

hanging in your closet; and to trade four out of five of the meals when you eat meat for a vegetarian plate instead? If your *future happiness*, like the modern American *dream*, depends on ever-increasing control, ever-increasing wealth, ever-increasing comfort, and an exponential growth in our ability to use energy, it is impossible to see how we reach that future given the limits and problems we face today. ***This is what freezes us into inaction, into distraction, and into medication as ways to cope with overwhelming change.*** Personally, I share the sentiment expressed by Lierre Keith and paraphrased here:

“I hate that what stops me from making the necessary changes to stave off collapse is that I actually benefit from the comfort and privilege I was born into.”

This is emblematic of the bind we find ourselves in today. We have to hold multiple needs and perspectives, usually contradictory, in our mind at the same time while making any meaningful decisions. We used to think of aspects of our culture: science, religion, technology, economics, politics, morality, progress, and laws as all being separate. One chose to believe in religion, but not science. One kept religion and finance out of politics. Laws could only ever enforce morality. And chiefly, progress was about mankind becoming emancipated from the tyranny of Nature. Our increasing use of oil and its byproducts has given us super-human abilities³² and control over our environment; and as science was informing us how Nature worked, we would *naturally* be able to rid ourselves of the dangers

³² One gallon of diesel, costing less than \$4 (2013), can move 80,000 pounds uphill in 5 minutes, equal to 80 days of labor by a single man.

Nature thrust upon us through weather, illness, and resource limitations. But today, we increasingly see these artificial boundaries being eroded and compromised: finance corrupts politics; science does not know everything, or even enough, to guarantee we can control Nature; technology gives the false sense that we can thrive while becoming increasingly isolated from one another; laws are being passed or ignored in order to perpetrate immoral acts; and religion, if it is considered to be relevant or useful, is used to dominate and exploit believers, and even to kill non-believers. These changes, loosely defined as *progress*, leave us feeling impotent to affect the world and fearful of being outside, immersed in our natural environment. We feel guilt and shame that we ever thought we could control our environment completely, or that we have managed to make such a mess of things through our hubris. We seek to salve our consciences by shopping for products that claim to be environmentally friendly, signing online petitions to save polar bears from the loss of their natural habitat, or blogging and tweeting to lead others to feel a similar angst over our future as a species.

Seen from another perspective, while it seems that we are now liberated from our connection to Nature by our technology, we actually have merely switched our connection **to** technology. This technology story promises us that we can control Nature, that we can insulate ourselves against Nature, and that we do not even need Nature. This salvation was a critical selling point: we did not even think about our separation from the *environment* until the environment began to fail. Primal people did not have a word for environment that meant something separate from their own milieu, some *thing* that could be used and polluted without consequence. We must understand however, how the concept of technology has so overtaken our sense of

what is important that in order to change that fundamental part of our world view we need some idea that is even more powerful to take its place. It is impossible to conceive of a technology that will further enhance our separation from that which sustains us, Nature, yet does not carry with it an inherent set of unintended consequences that will end up killing us.

We exist because of Nature: Nature is not something we can use and discard. Famously, during the 2012 Presidential campaign, Republicans were fond of referring to a statement by President Obama with their own retort, “We built this”. They claimed that they had *earned* their wealth solely through their own hard work and therefore were entitled to avoid taxation that would be, in their warped theory at least, a disincentive to increasing their desire to earn more money. This view ignored the obvious: that they receive a long list of benefits from the public purse; including subsidized resources, education that provides competent workers, a legal system that protects their contracts and liabilities, police and fire that offer protection of their property, and so on. Similarly, over 90% of the food in the produce section of my local market would disappear if bees and other pollinators did not exist to do their work, work that goes unrecognized, unappreciated, and unpaid. Likely **all** of the food would disappear if there were no sun or rain, both provided for *free*. We eat the bounty of Nature to stay alive; part of the bargain is that we too, become food for organisms after we die. Even if we are cremated, our constituent parts return to the common pool, to be used in building other life in some cases, or dirt in others. Living on a planet like Earth means we are in a bubble, a kind of closed system; we only have a certain, finite amount of energy and atoms within this biosphere, and although it *felt* infinite for most of our evolution, it is in fact limited. The same parts keep

joining and dividing, creating and destroying the many varied aspects of matter. Each and every part is dependent upon another, and influences the whole. Any notion that we can step out of that system and live independent of Nature cannot succeed for long. This understanding makes the belief that technology will only get infinitely better and may someday save us from ourselves, ludicrous. As long as technology encourages or demands that we see ourselves as separate from where we originate and tap our power, ***it is not our friend.***

How do we resolve these issues? How can we fashion a way of being in the world, of seeing the world, that enables us to step off this path that appears to be leading us to extinction? Is there a way of being that heals mankind, or are we only able, at this point in our evolution, to find ways to accept the destiny we have wrought through our unconscious decisions?

She Sat on a Tiny Stool

She sat on a tiny stool, not a foot high, just outside a stall that sold woven baskets. A baseball cap, adorned with spangles and English letters she could not possibly understand, was pulled down low over her forehead, hiding most of her face as she bent over her handwork. She pushed a needle, trailing a long, thin strip of plastic tarp through the larger piece; she was sewing two tarps together to make a bag that would be wider than she was tall. The air was still in the aisle of the outdoor market; the afternoon's approaching thunderstorm had yet to spawn the breeze that would cool the air below 100F. Sweat glistened on the back of her hands and forearms as she bent to her task. It was late April, 2013, and we were on the border between Thailand and Cambodia, in the Thai town called Poipet, a few

hundred yards from a crossing point between the two countries, inside the smuggler's zone.

*Maybe it was the whiteness of my legs, showing below my knee-length shorts, or maybe it was just the fear of someone approaching too close: she raised her head, tilted slightly so that just one eye could peek out from under the bill of her cap. Her gaze traveled quickly up to focus on my eyes, and then just as quickly she lowered her head and focused even harder on making her stitches. In that one moment when our eyes met, I knew this for sure: I could not possibly know what her world was like, nor she mine. To be 14, female, and born on the border was a life fundamentally different from anything I experience. To be 58, white male, and born in America was a life she could only imagine through the warped lenses of her culture's stories about foreigners. Yet we have something in common: **human**. I moved a few dozen meters further along the aisle, paused to wonder over the origins of a small wooden totem, and after a few minutes found myself drifting back towards where she sat on her plastic stool. Now a friend squatted close by her, and the two talked quietly together. She smiled at something her friend uttered, and then her head jerked to the left and an older woman, walking as if her left hip were fused and unable to bend, came out from behind the baskets that hung across the front of the stall and into the aisle. The woman began to berate the child, and her friend scampered away, ducking as she passed by the old woman as if dodging an expected blow, and disappearing among the crowd of people moving along the aisle. The girl on the stool cringed, as if she could fuse with the ground and thus not be hit, though the only blows raining down on her head were verbal. This time. I wondered; slave, kin, employee? I will never know the answer. But you might buy the purse that will*

*be shipped in that bag that she was sewing, some day.
And you'll only buy it if it is cheap enough. This vignette
is a peek into one aspect of how they are so cheap, these
things we buy.*

Where Are We Now?

“If we believe absurdities we will commit atrocities.”
Voltaire

Secrecy And Truth

“If the soul is left in darkness, sins will be committed. The guilty one is not he who commits the sin, but he who creates the darkness.”

Monseigneur Bienvenu in Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables*

Many people in the modern world have forsaken their spiritual life for one based in science. They see trees and stones as having no consciousness, they think that humans are the most-evolved of all life forms and the only life that has awareness, and they think that the Universe can be broken into small parts, examined and understood, and ultimately controlled. And yet, following just a few centuries of using the *scientific method*, science still has much to learn. Science cannot yet explain *consciousness*; nor can it detail exactly why music can touch our emotions effectively and over centuries (think Bach, Beethoven, or Mozart, for example). We can use what we understand about gravity to fly men to the moon and back, but we still don’t know *how* gravity works. Similarly, the effects of gravity prove that we can only detect about 25% of the energy and matter that make up our Universe: the remaining 75% is referred to as either dark matter or dark energy; precisely because we don’t know what or where it is, how

it works, or how it affects us³³. How incomplete is our understanding of reality, really?

There are many ideas that we take as *fact* that have unexplained implications disproving our understanding of reality. Light can act as a particle or a wave; but it is proven that the very **act of observation** changes how it manifests. Apparently, the energy we call *light* exists only as *potential* until it is observed; then and only then does it manifest with properties we can recognize. In other words, until consciousness becomes aware of energy, energy might not even be noticeable. The Moon might not hang in the night sky unless someone is looking at it! In an ever more bizarre twist, tests have shown that energy acts as if it is being observed, **even when the actual observation will only take place at some future time**. Remember the footnote about the amplituhedron? What if **all** our notions of time and space are just hallucinations of our mind because we see ourselves, inaccurately, as separate from God? Denying the observer affect denies our impact on the world and how **our consciousness helps create reality**. Many scientists claim that competition is the driving force in Nature, yet the competition between a few lions to see which one will get enough to eat is one small act in the much larger play: the play is really about the *food chain*, and the myriad ways that symbiotes and parasites and scavengers cooperate in order to maintain balance and sustainability. The play is also about rearing young and caring for the sick and elderly, aspects of life conveniently forgotten in the rush to justify domination and exploitation. And altruism, doing something to aid another without reward, has been demonstrated not just

³³ I picture people on some world near Earth but undetectable to our eyes, wondering where the **other 25%** of their Universe lies...

in humans, but in animals such as rats as well! We demonstrate in experiments time and again that particles can be *entangled* and communicate changes in their state to one another instantaneously, which means at faster-than-light-speed, despite the *law* that nothing can travel that fast.

Science has told us that we live in four dimensions: three of space (height, width, depth) and one of time. What if that view is incomplete? What if there is a fifth dimension: consciousness? What if life cannot exist without consciousness? What if the underlying *ground of being*, upon which all manifestation rests, is merely conscious energy, or in other words *mind*? The four dimensions of this modern worldview give us the illusion that they can be measured. They offer us the ability to make reality abstract, to convert energy into an idea that can then be named, judged, used, or discarded as irrelevant. And by defining reality in only four dimensions, we automatically separate and isolate *parts*, all the while telling ourselves that we know everything we need to know in order to *understand* what is going on. But this mode of seeing the world is not based in relationship; that only happens when we introduce the notion of consciousness. It is based on separation. Awareness of how energy relates to itself is the heart of consciousness. It has long been said that *the map is not the territory*, meaning you can be at home and trace with your finger the route from your home to a restaurant on a map, but merely tracing the route doesn't give you the ability to eat food from that restaurant. You actually have to have a relationship with the world in order to connect your hunger with something that will satisfy it. It takes being in relationship with the energy, and being aware of its nature, for us to live. A world built in only four dimensions is missing a key ingredient, and any

perspective that is missing such a critical dimension is incomplete and lacks integrity.

Science hangs its hat (currently, at least) on the birth of the Universe as described in the *Big Bang* theory. Speaking of incomplete, science is unable today to describe what happened in the first handful of milliseconds following that first supposed explosion that kicked things off; it is unable to explain how all that matter was able to expand at faster-than-light speed. Once they postulate that the Universe has suddenly grown to a much larger size, then they can use the *Laws of Physics* to explain the rest of the development of stars and planets, but the first few instants remain unexplainable. What if... there was only energy, obviously entangled because it had only existed together before this event, that suddenly *woke up*^{*}; a *mind*^{*} suddenly becoming aware of its surroundings? What if energy became *conscious*^{*} for the first time; wouldn't it all become *manifest*^{*} simultaneously? When you wake up, do you process along your body, waking your neck, your hands, your thighs, your feet; step by step, one at a time? No, all of your parts wake up, or you become conscious of all your parts, simultaneously. This is not just because your cells are entangled, but also because you are not separate from the underlying energy of the Universe which is all interconnected. That which your ego defines as *me*^{*} is just one aspect of God, made manifest and with some degree of awareness. How might this explanation change your view of our Universe?

Here's one of the most important scientific minds of all time, Max Planck:

“As a man who has devoted his whole life to the most clear headed science, to the study of matter, I can tell you as a result of my research about atoms this much: There is no matter as such. All

matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter. I regard consciousness as fundamental. **I regard matter as derivative from consciousness.**”

In *We Are All On Flight 93* I will often point out that separation and individualization are the root of our problems. Why is isolation so problematic?

- In America, we live lives where we voluntarily seek solace in isolation. We focus attention on electronic devices to the exclusion of others in the same room; we go to our own room to sleep alone; we shut the door in our office to have *quiet* and supposedly get more work done; we focus on our footsteps as we walk along the sidewalk rather than the people around us; we see others in the aisle at the market as obstacles rather than fellow travelers in this material world. But people who do this to an extreme extent are labeled *social outcasts* or paranoid and seen as dysfunctional. We encourage our children (at least, we used to) to get out and play with friends rather than read too many books or watch too much TV. We worry that children who are home-schooled won't learn social skills. We claim to want to protect our *space*, but we recognize that isolation cannot be excessive or we will suffer.
- We use sensory deprivation as a psychological tool to expand our awareness and to learn how our mind operates, yet we know that staying too

long in the *tank* will drive us mad. Cut off the mind from the senses, force it to live completely in the abstract world of ideas we have constructed, and we hallucinate. Why would we go insane after even a relatively short time spent cut off from the *outside* world, if isolation was a good way to live?

- Much was made of the heroin use and addiction among American servicemen in Vietnam, yet studies showed that 88% of the addicts quickly and successfully walked away from their dependency upon returning home. It appears that the isolation they felt while overseas was the motivating factor in their self-medication: once they were back in familiar environments, able to relate to loved ones, their need to take drugs went away. For them, their drug use was all about easing the pain of isolation and not about the drug itself. Studies also show that mice, given a choice of water laced with sugar, but containing morphine, or plain water, will choose the plain water when they are in a cage with others, and choose the morphine only when isolated and alone. The morphine holds no attraction by itself. Again, this shows how we depend upon relationship to function.
- Studies continue to show that solitary confinement, an integral part of the punishment system in prisons in America, causes extensive and long-lasting psychological problems. Using isolation as punishment should be enough to show it is inappropriate for people who wish to live happy lives.
- Recently proposals have been made to send people to Mars, with no hope of returning to Earth. Psychologists oppose this idea, citing the

threat that isolation will destroy the colony. They point out that not only will interactions with humans be limited, and thus conflicts eventually will be unresolvable, but they also worry that always having to live either in a dome or in a spacesuit, unable to interact directly with the environment, will prove deadly. Again, isolation is problematic.

- It is impossible to live in actual, complete isolation; we cannot make the water or oxygen that we must have for daily life. In his book, “Chance and Chaos” David Ruelle writes that if you could wave a wand and remove the gravitational pull of just one electron on the edge of the Universe, that the course of a single atom here on Earth would be changed within 50 collisions of the original atom with other atoms, in just a blink of an eye. *Everything is connected* is not just a saying that we can choose to believe, or not. How can we change our worldview to take this relationship into account? How can we start to live as if our relationships, not our ideas, are most important?

What if our core human value is morality? What if our job here in this life is to learn to manifest only truth? Can we fight the loss of trust and truth, can we draw back the curtains and bring sunlight to the dark, dank corners of our society now shrouded in secrecy? How can we rebuild our connection with others and our world when so much of our innate relationship has eroded away? What is it that you seek when you are on your best behavior, in other words, when you are acting morally? If you are like most people, you sense that there is a profound, non-dual truth that lies at the foundation of our material existence. Some people call

this foundation God, others string theory, but nearly everyone desires to understand it better and to connect with it more often and in more satisfying ways. Because we inhabit corporeal bodies, we live in a world of duality, where opposite states of being lie along a continuum, and your awareness can move along that spectrum as your experience and your understanding changes your viewpoint. For example, one spectrum is hot on one end, cold on the other. Or we might examine truth and lie, or good and evil. Implicit in any spectrum is a seemingly inherent human need to judge, to select one end of the spectrum as being *better* than the other. This world of duality also lends itself to creating structural hierarchy; our modern culture's hierarchy places mind over emotion, male over female, self over world, idea over feeling, doing over being, and good over evil. But ultimately, none of these are *Truth*: they are all a result of a story we tell ourselves to attempt to make sense of the world, of a choice we make about what is important, or from our making a distinction about something and then making a judgment about it. Is this where we get side-tracked, because our *story* is all about ideas and not about experiences? Do we spend all our energy on thoughts, and none on merely *being* in relationship?

Our morality is also a cultural artifact; yet often it springs from our sense of what is just, or what our spiritual teachers have told us is *good* in the eyes of our Divine Master. Note that when we focus our attention on being spiritual, we seek a spiritual experience that confirms our connection with all-that-is. We do not seek a spiritual thought; we talk about our spiritual beliefs, not our spiritual conclusions.

Another way to speak of this wholeness we feel when we connect with our source is to use the word *integrity*. At its root, integrity means *whole*: when

we are complete, we are integral. Spiritual experience allows us to feel that what we sense as our identity of *Self* encompasses the whole of existence; thus it places us in our own integrity. Morality, or the expression of truth and the manifestation of right action, is what we demonstrate when we live in integrity. We must live whole in order to be whole. Our issues today might well stem entirely from the fact that this modern culture denies integrity. Let's look at how freedom, trust, and truth, fundamental parts of integrity, are being affected by this denial.

Freedom, or free will, is how we demonstrate our integrity. We are what we do in the dark: when I do something that I will not be proud of but I think that I can get away with it because I expect that no one will ever find out, then that is my true nature on display. We all have freedom to act; few among us act with complete integrity. We can never know everything there is to know before making decisions; and so we rely, to varying degrees, on trust: trusting others, trusting ourselves, trusting data. If that trust is violated, a clear lack of integrity, then that will affect us and any future decisions that we make involving the untrustworthy party or data. Let's acknowledge that the untrustworthy person is often ourselves. It may be obvious that truth is an important aspect of integrity, but we often overlook one very important question that we should always pose about truth: **am I 100% sure** that this is true? Byron Katie has developed a short process she calls "*The Work*" that explains and develops this concept. It starts with this question, and if you are honest with yourself, you can see how there is very little we can be 100% sure about, especially if other people (and their stories) are involved. We all make sense of our world through storytelling. Someone cuts us off in traffic and we tell ourselves we have been wronged or disrespected, that

we will now be late for an important meeting because that other guy was so rude, that we almost got hit, or that he must be in a great hurry; the potential stories we can tell ourselves are myriad. We make decisions and take actions based on one or two of these stories, as if we knew the truth. But we don't, and so we are not acting from integrity when we do this. We could just as easily let everyone get in front of us and wish that they have a wonderful, blessed life, without telling much of a story at all. How different does that feel? Try to think of something that is 100% true...

Similarly, our unconscious mind filters the millions of bits of sensory input that our brain takes in every second, looking for the important or pertinent data, and then presents us with a heavily-edited version of reality and usually a story to explain how we should feel about it or react to it. Trying to do this while only using the energy of a refrigerator light bulb, our brain leaves most of the available data out of our conscious awareness, data that could easily *change my reality* if I were to be aware of it. My ego's primary responsibility, to keep *me safe* while on a strict energy budget, means that I usually react out of habit rather than any intense processing. If an arising situation looks like something I have encountered before, I see only the solution I used previously; it's just easier that way. Additionally, if I expect to see something then I will see it, and if something entirely foreign comes into my space I may fail to recognize it because I'm not looking for it, or I don't even know what it might be. I look at something in your hand and my mind labels it *book*; but someone who has grown up in the rainforest of Ecuador, and has no word in her language for book, would be unable to attach the same emotional, economic, or use value to it that I do. She might see some leaves pressed together rather than something to *read*. But all of this means

that as much as we prefer to think that we make good decisions, we are usually wrong! We fail to see pertinent facts, we misinterpret what we do see, and throughout the process we are relying upon the particular slant that our culture has taught us as being the correct view. Part of our indoctrination includes the inability to see other possible ways to define our world and to act within it. “There is no alternative” is one way our story defends itself, and this makes it difficult for us to break out of any old, dysfunctional story and start a new one. As one example: even today, different cultures have different world views. Americans feel that we always have to be moving, to be doing *something*. We fear boredom, and will read magazines, or check email on our phone, while standing in line at the supermarket. We eat on the run, and treat food as *fuel*, and often eat alone ; unlike the French for instance who treat food as something that is savored, and treat eating as an experience worthy of respect and an event to be shared, especially with friends and family. This is one way that a different take on life, one of connection and relationship, can manifest even in our modern world.

The notion of *Truth* is central to this book. One of the Buddha’s Four Noble Truths posits that *everything changes*. In the 2500 years since he presented his view of the world and our human place in it, that is one of the few *truths* that hasn’t changed. Writing in “*Deep Truth: Igniting the Memory of Our Origin, History, Destiny, and Fate*”, Gregg Braden points out that despite our trust in science there are many ideas we were taught as youngsters that, because of peer-reviewed scientific research, are no longer valid yet continue to be taught, and continue to inform our decision-making. As a personal example, I can still remember hearing about a new idea that was being proposed in the mid-1960s: plate tectonics. This

hypothesis said that the seven continents as we know them today began as one land mass, and that they had shifted, riding the surface of the molten interior of our Earth, into their present and still-moving locations. The scientist presenting this notion was ridiculed and dismissed; yet today we take his theory as fact. Mr. Braden presents six such notions in his book, all of which are critical for us to understand if we are to make the decisions needed to change course today. I present them here, with my own explanations and comments:

- ***Evolution explains life itself, and human life*** Considered one of the most profound scientific hypothesis of the 20th century, Darwin's Theory of Evolution has become deeply engrained in our consciousness, albeit in a rather distorted form. He argued for natural selection as the driver of change among all life in his book, "*On the Origin of the Species*"; that portrayal of the competitive nature of evolution became widely accepted very quickly, and continues to be taught in schools today. We teach our children that evolution is what brings about changes in all life as if it were a gentle, methodical process and without beginning to understand and teach the newest concept still being developed: **epigenetics**. Nature uses crisis to learn what adaptations aren't working and to discard them, and to let innovative solutions supersede the dysfunctional life that can't survive. This evolution then happens in spurts, not in a predictable manner, which gives us the sense that we can evolve rapidly in response to today's problems. Scientists also tell us that the human body including the size of our brain, has changed

very little over the last 200,000 years. We humans are extremely complex physical specimens; it takes 20 different proteins to clot our blood; remove even one protein and bleeding will not stop until we are dead. It is difficult to imagine how this state of affairs, this **irreducible complexity**, *evolved*! It almost seems to point to *intelligent design*; I'm just sayin'... They are also unable to point to a single case whereby small and incremental changes of an evolving species have actually resulted in a *new* species. And scientists now have demonstrated in useable ways the quick adaptation of life from epigenetics: the way in which gene expression is affected by current events and that the modified genes can be passed along to offspring without actually changing the DNA of the body. **We are not captive to our DNA**, destined from birth to endure particular diseases or short lifespans. We will look more at this concept shortly, when we examine how perceptions affect our worldview.

- ***Civilization began only 5,000 years ago***
While we have yet to find manuscripts from 13,500 years ago, science now knows that there have been civilizations that arose and fell many times in the past, before we have any remaining written records that explain their culture or history. We have found cave paintings that were executed about 40,000 years ago³⁴. Indigenous

³⁴ The earliest cave painting found in Europe dates back to the Aurignacian period, approximately 40,000 years ago, and is found in the El Castillo cave in Cantabria, Spain.

people on several continents describe at least three prior civilizations, distinct and separated in time. The Mayan people described our time, 2012, as being the end of the fourth world. Archeologists continue to find ruins of cities that predate our modern written historical records by thousands of years. Science still can't explain how the Egyptian Pyramids were built³⁵, how several ancient civilizations understood orbital mechanics, nor how some Roman concrete roads have managed to last, maintenance-free, for two millennia. To think that our society is the pinnacle of Man's achievement is deeply egotistical.

- ***Consciousness is separate from, and does not affect, the physical world*** As already mentioned above. Consciousness is the fifth dimension; our modern worldview leaves off at four. Delving into why this four dimensional myth is wrong forms the basis of this book, and will continue to touch every section.
- ***Space between things is empty*** If you are like me, you were taught that matter can be divided into smaller and smaller parts, until at some point you come to the atom. Atoms are made of (the teaching goes) electrons that whirl around protons and neutrons like planets around our Sun, with lots of space in between the moving parts. There are at least three big

³⁵ There is much disagreement also about **when** they were built; and oddly, the Egyptian government forbids the testing that might give us a better answer than the *guesses* we have now.

problems that science has pointed out about this model: 1) this only explains about a quarter of the matter and energy in the Universe, 2) experiments based on quantum physics demonstrate that the exact nature of matter and energy appears to be dependent upon an observer, and *matter's properties vary according to the **consciousness** of that observer*, and 3) this explodes any notion that there is a boundary between *me* and the world *outside of me*. Look at the atoms that make up my skin and you will find more than 99% empty space; it is **only the energy bonds** between the material parts that make it seem like matter is solid. Energy and water flow almost at will into and out of our bodies; our heart generates an electromagnetic field; we absorb and radiate heat; we are not separate, firm, or distinct bodies in any real way.

- ***Nature is survival of the fittest, meaning strongest*** Again, the idea of natural selection as the driver of evolution requires that competition be the dominant incentive in Nature for success; yet study after study shows that cooperation is how life succeeds. We are not teaching this to our children yet: Your body contains about 100 billion *human* cells; yet nearly 900 billion *other* cells: bacteria, parasites, and viruses; also inhabit the *space* we call our *body*, as delineated by our skin. Most of these are beneficial and work with our bodies to achieve our desired outcome of enjoying long life. Even those that can be considered deadly usually

require some outside trigger before they can overtake the body and end its life prematurely. And as one famous politician/writer titled a book, *“It Takes a Village”* is how this world works; not one of us would be able to live completely and utterly alone, a la Robinson Crusoe, for any length of time. Over 400 peer-reviewed studies show that **cooperation is the only way** families, communities, and species survive.

- ***War is a natural condition of the human experience*** The first sign of war in all excavations, including one going back 13,500 years is at the beginning of our own 5,000 year cycle. Excavations at sites like Göbekli Tepe³⁶ uncover no weapons, no armaments, no walls, and no mass graves; all typical signs of battles either feared or fought. What does it mean that we are the first known civilization to use violence against other humans to stay alive? Can we understand the new ways of thinking that can

³⁶ Located in Turkey, this city has been dated to 11,500 years ago; just at the end of the last Ice Age, and before the time we believe that agriculture had begun to be used by human societies. *National Geographic* writes, “At the time of Göbekli Tepe’s construction much of the human race lived in small nomadic bands that survived by foraging for plants and hunting wild animals. Construction of the site would have required more people coming together in one place than had likely occurred before. Amazingly, the temple’s builders were able to cut, shape, and transport 16-ton stones hundreds of feet despite having no wheels or beasts of burden... We used to think agriculture gave rise to cities and later to writing, art, and religion. Now the world’s oldest temple suggests *the urge to worship sparked civilization.*”

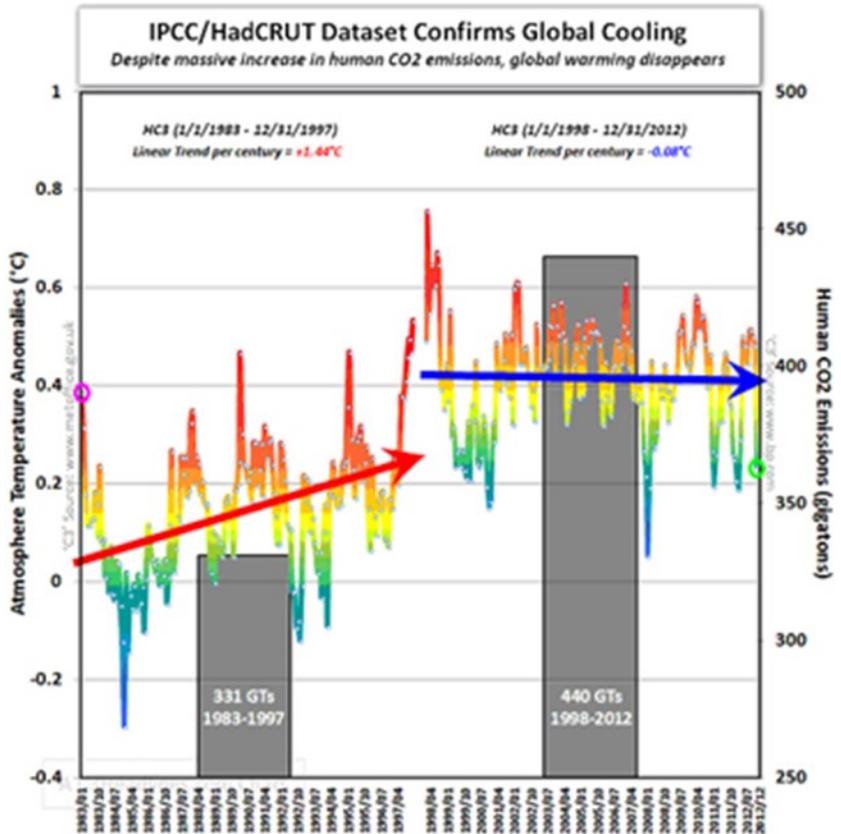
replace all of these outdated, disproven ideas?
What future is possible if we switch our approach
and our assumptions about how the Universe
works?

These concepts are false, yet we continue to try to solve our problems using them as a premise. We **can** change. There have been, and **continue to be**, alternate ways of viewing the Universe that do not carry with them our modern society's level of dysfunction. Consciousness is **key** to working out our problems. This Universe is made up of energy and at least **five dimensions**, not the four that we use for decision-making. Competition is **not** the model Nature uses. When cooperation breaks down, the results are **disastrous** in all cases. We do **not** have to use war as our ultimate solution.

Mr. Braden is adamant: there are no **mere** observers, we all influence the world with our thoughts, our actions, and our beliefs and we need to **own this concept**. And care, appreciation, gratitude, compassion; these are the qualities that can see us through.

Again, questioning if we can ever be 100% sure about the truth of some idea, can we hold an idea in mind, in body, in feeling and in love, and yet not be so wedded to it that we cannot abide a contrary opinion? Example: climate change. For decades, activists have been warning us that the Earth is warming. It took many studies and many controversies before a majority of climate scientists agreed that Earth was in fact getting hotter, and even longer to agree that humans were driving the changes. But remember, when Galileo wrote that the Earth was not the center of the Universe, 99% of scientists at the time thought it was. And before

Magellan's expedition of 1519–1522, most scholars and scientists thought the Earth was flat. We look back now on these paradigm shifts and sometimes laugh at the foolish people who didn't know much, yet we hardly know any better. What if, for example, it were to be shown by examining ice cores from Antarctica that the Earth goes through a long, 100,000 year cycle of warming and cooling, and that the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere tend to trail the heating of the air by 400 years? What if carbon dioxide in the past has filled the air at much higher levels than today, without the help of mankind? What if life managed to exist throughout these fluctuations? What if the periods of ice are worse than the periods of heat? And what if humans managed to evolve our greater intelligence and earliest civilizations and even art *during* the most recent cold spell? What if the data can be interpreted to show global ***cooling?***



There are scientists who have drilled that ice core, found those results about the long cycles of change and the trailing role of carbon dioxide, and tend to disbelieve that Man is the **sole cause** of climate change. Yet the media and climate activists are unwilling to entertain the notion that man may not be *the only cause* of our current atmospheric disruptions. It may not be warming; temperature readings may be skewed towards urban heat islands, most temperature rise may be absorbed by ocean waters, it may be true (as some have

stated) that ice caps are relatively rare and not the norm for Earth. The weather may be hotter, but there are many suspects: changes in the albedo (reflectivity) of the land and ice, changes in the energy output of our Sun, methane released in huge quantities by cows as our consumption of beef and dairy products has grown, changes in flow patterns and rates of oceanic currents; this is a start of a very long list of other potential causes. Our state of the art computer modeling is just that: incomplete, complex beyond our ability to process even after decades of advances in technology and measurements, and missing many pieces of the puzzle, such as the ability of clouds and other moisture in the air to impact climate or the ultimate impact of melting permafrost. We may think we know, and may exclude people from our lives and conversations if they think they know a different truth, but **no one knows for sure**. This does not alter the fact that **carbon dioxide is not the only problem with burning fossil fuels** for energy, far from it. We should also question the environmental and human health effects from fossil fuels' pollution, during the refining, use, and disposal processes; the impact on our economy from peak *cheap* oil; our dependence upon long supply chains that a disruption in oil supply might wipe out; the political and military problems posed by depending upon oil for *every* aspect of our modern life; the toxic legacies left behind during and after oil's extraction, the soot and other carbon-based molecules released by burning it, the wealth inequalities fostered by taxpayer subsidies of oil companies and the windfall profits from gasoline price manipulations, the illnesses and deaths of people, plants, and animals from herbicides and pesticides created from oil, the wars fought over access to oil; there are myriad reasons why oil is problematic, so I am not suggesting that we should just keep merrily

drilling and fracking and burning our way into the future. Climate change, no matter if it is by cooling or warming (or both, just in different places), will also affect us by destroying what we have built through water, wind, or fire damages; by creating *climate refugees*; and by forcing us to relocate our food and water supplies, at great cost to us in resources and energy. And of course, humans, if not the sole cause of climate change, are undoubtedly a contributing factor. But how does it change our approach if we can hold in mind that our reaction to climate change need not also involve a heavy dose of guilt laid upon our neighbors, and shame upon ourselves? Who is the greater fool here? Is it a climate denier, or each one of us every time we buy plastics goods, gasoline, or industrial-farmed food? Can we find ways to live that don't involve so much petro-destruction, and that are based in cooperation instead?

It is possible that the information we are given seems irrelevant to our lives, is incomplete, or is just unintelligible. Note how in this summary of a report, the authors felt compelled to define the problem in terms of economics rather than the impact on our food supply, impacts on the many other life forms that depend on bees, or on the future prospects of the bees themselves:

“Bee populations are so low in the US that it now takes 60% of the country’s surviving colonies just to pollinate one California crop, almonds. And that’s not just a west coast problem—California supplies 80% of the world’s almonds, a market worth \$4 billion.”

Another aspect of this debate should be about why the climate change deniers are so adamant that it is not happening. Sure, some of them see a New-World-Order-type conspiracy behind any official announcement. But if we stop and listen for even a few moments, they often

have a point: the issue of climate change will be used to create market-based solutions to the problem that only serve as yet another vehicle to siphon money from the bottom 90% to the bank accounts of the top 10%. Carbon taxes, and cap-and-trade schemes were the early versions; others have followed. Does it really *solve* global warming if a company polluting air in Canada plants a tree or three in Africa? But if someone can make a commission by crafting that deal... the possibilities are endless, and pointless, other than to **make money**. The point here is that any particular point of view contains some bit of truth, and makes some bit of sense. We can all become better at truly *listening*, and garnering what wisdom lies buried in the muck of every conversation or point of view, rather than insisting that everyone else must change *their* minds and begin to think ~~the right way~~ like we do.

I ask, are these ideas true in your experience?

- Protesting, online petitions, or marching in the streets are now ineffective tools
- Love is healing grace that helps in all situations
- It matters who I vote for in state or national elections
- Everyone must work for money
- Using drugs is a crime that needs punishment
- We don't teach kids to be good parents; they pay a price for **our** fear
- "We don't have the money to fund that..." is a valid excuse for inaction

The flip side of the argument that you are what you do in the dark is what happens when we cannot hide: when we are under total surveillance. Knowing we are always being watched changes our behavior and stifles dissent. The inability to associate secretly means there is no

longer any possibility for free association. The inability to whisper means there is no longer any speech that is truly free of coercion, real or implied. Most profoundly, pervasive surveillance threatens to eliminate the most vital element of both democracy and social movements: the mental space for people to form dissenting and unpopular views. What surveillance really is, at its root, is a highly effective form of social control. Democracy, even the shadow of democracy we currently practice in America, rests on the bedrock foundation of free association, free speech, freely available information, and freedom to dissent. The consequence of the coercive power of surveillance is to subvert this foundation and undermine everything democracy rests on. And the most insidious aspect of the current state of affairs is this: by automating the process of surveillance, they have created the ability to effortlessly peer into the lives of everyone, all the time, and thus create a system with unprecedented potential for controlling how we behave and think. By using contractors, rather than government employees, they not only bypass the normal constraints that would limit the government's ability to use the data, they place our data firmly in the hands of the corporations who are controlling not only we the consumers, but also the government itself. As corporations firmly grasp the power and control afforded them by the surveillance state, and concentrate ownership of the media in the hands of the very few, even freedom of the press falls away, leaving no one to investigate malfeasance or report on violations of legal or moral codes of conduct. When whistleblowers become the only criminals, the lawbreakers are unleashed and the darkness deepens...

In the 1880s, new laws emerged allowing fences to be placed around property in many of the Plains states of America. You may not be surprised: fences began to

appear on **other peoples' land**, and consequently fence-cutting became a form of active resistance, as people tried to defend **their own space**. The law then stepped up to ensure that the crime of fence-cutting was punished far more than the crime of fencing illegally. This is a clear example that our situation today, whereby whistleblowers are jailed and criminals are not, is not new or particular to this time. Indeed, it appears to be an integral part of oppression: the criminalization of dissent.

So we are severely challenged to live in integrity when there are so many issues with the rational thought process our culture expects us to use. We cannot *think* our life, we live it, we experience it. We find our deepest feeling of integrity within experience, not thought. We must always question everything our mind tells us, because nothing can be proven to be 100% true. We think using limited data anyway. We are taught that there is no alternative, that this is how things must be; an altogether funny thought since you only have to look back into your own past to see that you have had other ways of living that work, too. So how can we find our core, our *Truth*? As already noted, our deepest sense of connectedness comes not through thought but through experience. What is your experience of *Truth* in today's American culture? Let's look at some examples of how truth is manifesting, and how secrecy is trying to hide the truth from us all.

We are informed about the cultural view through our media; in 2013, that includes social media as well as all forms of Internet communication. Traditional TV, satellite broadcasts, and even the instantaneous nature of that electronic device you carry in pocket or purse, also keep you in the loop of culture. Can we trust the media we see and hear? Note this bit of news from 2013: a poll showed that Louisiana Republicans are more

likely to blame Obama than Bush for the poor federal response to Hurricane Katrina, which happened in 2005, years before Obama was President. How else could that happen, if not for lies spread by media? Answer: possibly because of the *echo chamber* effect; when all of your interactions are with those who agree with you. In an echo chamber, no one catches errors in thinking because all use the same principles and ideologies and sources for (slanted) news. Echo chambers arise both when I personally lack trust in myself and seek validation from all I interact with, and when an emphasis on secrecy limits potential dissenting points of view by making them unutterable.

Remember the disaster of Lysenkoism, in which Communist ideology distorted scientific truth and all but destroyed Russian biological science? Today, however, it is politically effective, and socially acceptable, to deny scientific fact:

- Climate deniers continue to obfuscate or sidetrack any debate about solutions by manufacturing doubt about fundamental issues in climate science that were decided scientifically decades ago
- anti-vaccine campaigners brandish a few long-discredited studies to make unproven claims about links between autism and vaccination to such an extent the Oregon is now revising its policies for school enrollment to accommodate so many unvaccinated children
- If two planes could cause three buildings in the World Trade Center Complex to collapse in 2001, then our building codes are deeply flawed and should have been massively revised in subsequent years. But there has not even been a discussion about making any changes; why is that? The inaction could lead a reasonable

person to decide that the collapses were expected, and not due to the planes; otherwise any building built using similar techniques would place thousands of people at risk and should be renovated.

- Studies consistently show that any amount of radiation exposure increases a person's chance of dying from cancer. This knowledge is why when you get x-rays, you are shielded by lead aprons and the technician goes into another room. Just disabling radiation sensors, as the U.S. government did along the West Coast immediately following the Fukushima meltdowns in 2011, does not make the resulting radiation in our air and water suddenly *safe*.
- North Carolina has banned state planners from using climate data in their projections of future sea levels.

Our trust in our government has been severely undermined by its abrogation of the human rights ideals we were taught decades ago:

- We now use torture
- We now lock people up without trial or letting their family know: Indefinite detention
- We have used drones to assassinate thousands of people, including citizens
- We imprison whistleblowers, not the lawbreakers they uncover
- We continue to use executions for particular *crimes* (we are the last of the developed economies to do so)
- Authorities have been proven guilty of fabrication of evidence
- We endure warrantless surveillance to such an extent that courts won't even hear a case

attempting to end the practice unless you can prove you are being spied upon; an obvious Catch-22

- We have created moral hazards in finance, education, government, and our military

You may not even believe some of the items on this list; that would be the result of the secrecy and lies that have been a hallmark of government, especially after the events of September 11, 2001. Sadly, **trust once lost cannot be regained at any price.**

What happens when we place responsibility for our food safety with the government? When government controls our food, for instance, we are often prevented from feeding people for free; whether it is regulation that prevents someone from drinking raw milk from their own or a neighbor's cow, or a local law that prevents the homeless from being given free food out of concern that the food might be unsafe. Yet we have managed, through decades of legislation meant to control those with the least amount of common sense, to criminalize behavior that is rarely, if ever, deadly. I expect you are getting tired of this next phrase: *studies consistently show that* by far the most dangerous food in America is *home-cooked*, not food that is prepared outside the home. In most countries around the world, home-grown food is sold through markets without regulation or testing. Consumers there cook the food well and are not sickened by it. Consumers there also only buy what they can use quickly, as they often don't have access to cold food storage. Here in America, we have bought the notion of *convenience* as evidenced by visiting the local market only once or twice a week. Food safety issues might well be worse here simply because we store food past its natural and safe shelf life, or because microwave reheating is inconsistent and thus unsafe. Go to any market in Thailand for instance, and

you will see pork and chicken and fish, usually raw, laid out upon a table in temperatures often exceeding 100°F for your selection. A bored seller will often, though not always, wave something over the meat to keep the flies away. While we might be horrified at the lack of cooling or sanitation, it does not appear to pose a threat to health because the meat will be properly cleaned and cooked at home.

The issue of moral hazard is widespread today, not only in the big picture but in the personal as well:

- If you could stay home and relax all day and actually make more money than you do at your current job, would you do it? Many people have faced this dilemma, either because of government unemployment³⁷ or welfare benefits that exceed the minimum wage, or by claiming disability even if they could work. The moral hazard arises when acting with integrity effectively punishes you, when compared with those who act selfishly. It is often said that we can't just give people unemployment benefits because it removes their incentive to work; but if we have fewer jobs, don't we need some people to not work? Imagine limiting everyone to working only 20 hours a week, and making a minimum wage that allows one income to support a family of four on this limited schedule. What creativity might we see as people have more time away

³⁷ I like Italian unemployment: there you have an option, rather than the normal collection of weekly checks for a three year period, if you can get five other people to join you, you can choose to take your entire three year allotment upfront so that you can pool your money and start a business. Naturally, you are ineligible for further benefits should the business go bust, but that just makes sense, don't you agree?

from their jobs? Surely people will be more productive when they are at work, as they will be more energized, and less distracted by errands or worries about what is going on at home that they are missing. We also would reap the benefits of better relationships and more care and attention given to children, no longer forced into day care provided by strangers, and to the ill and elderly, as workers spend more time at home. As a side note, studies consistently show that raising the minimum wage does not mean jobs are taken away; they also demonstrate that corporate profits are little affected, as companies raise prices to compensate for higher wage costs, and increased income for workers means more sales.

- Capitalism encourages business and government to ignore morality in favor of profit, clearly a moral hazard. It turns out that Great Britain sold the Syrian dictator President al-Assad nerve gas component chemicals ten months **after** the current (2011-present) upheaval began in that country, but why let morality get in the way of making money? At least they sold it; we gave Saddam the stuff a few decades ago, so that he could gas some of his nation's people. And it is not nice to point fingers at others for acting just as you do: the U.S. has tons of chemical weapons, more than any other nation, stored for *use, just in case*. Regardless, it is clearly hypocritical to manufacture and store the resources, provide some of the resources to others, and then complain when they are used by someone else.
- Thirty years ago they told us that 401(k) retirement accounts were going to provide us with a comfy retirement. The evidence is in, and they have not, do not, and will not. They have

provided a rich flow of fees to the financial industry. And the failure to live up to the propaganda is, they say, our fault because we do not save enough. Out of what, our falling wages? Our unemployment checks? Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid were created for a reason. We cannot afford to retire. Given health care costs, we cannot even afford to live. We have a societal problem, not a financial one. None of us can go it alone. *We must rely on each other.*

- Telling the truth is a lost art, especially if you think you can get away with it, the definition of moral hazard. We are assured by the government that policing mechanisms are in place so that no one's rights will be abrogated by warrantless surveillance; during the last decade of increased activity under the Patriot Act, that policing was claimed to occur within the United States Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC, also called the FISA Court). As for the FISA court's oversight, after it found some of National Security Agency's activities to be unconstitutional, the NSA did not reform - it simply lied to the court. Since there are no opposing attorneys to challenge or question what the FISA court is told, the law-breaking was allowed to continue and even increase.
- Why can't we hear the arguments in the Bradley Manning case? Isn't knowing what is being done in our name important? Isn't that knowledge at the core of freedom, and some would say, democracy?
- In July 2013, a bill that would have removed the funding from NSA surveillance programs was narrowly defeated in the House of Representatives. The interesting aspect of this

was the broad coalition that tried to cut the funding: it was the progressive wing of the Democrats, joining the Tea Party. Establishment Democrats and Republicans, those supposedly in the *middle*, joined forces to defeat the proposal, clearly demonstrating that the moral hazard of corporate money has made our elected officials beholden not to us, the people. In essence, this was the people versus the corporations; and *we* almost won. This focuses attention on the *rule of law*: how can there be a *secret* law that prevents one from challenging an arrest or surveillance or an indefinite detention? How can we possibly claim to be a free people when these structures secretly exist?³⁸ The only person who has gone to jail following a decade of torturing prisoners is John Kirikau, a whistleblower **who tried to stop the torture**, while the torturers themselves just keep on torturing. Then there is Jay Bybee, the 9th Circuit Court Judge who signed the torture memos, who continues to rule in favor of torture, collects \$250,000 each year for life, and yet can't travel outside the U.S. for fear of being arrested and tried as a war criminal.

- Even when financial institutions are found to be violating the laws regarding fraud, money-

³⁸ Due to the NSA leaks and discussions about what is *legal* under various statutes enacted over the last few decades, we have begun to understand that there is a *shadow government* that defines terms in new laws as it sees fit, thus in effect, making anything it wants to do *legal* without the knowledge or consent of the people or our representatives. Unless you know how critical terminology is defined by the *authorities* you have no way of knowing what is legal and what is not

laundering, or securities trading, they are let off with a small (relative to their gains) fine and no need to admit guilt or even promise to stop the practices. The drug-money laundering at HSBC was so entrenched that the drug cartels designed and used boxes in which they placed their cash that were designed to fit exactly through the teller windows of the banks. Time is money after all. In the four years, 2009 – 2012, bank of America paid more than **\$45 billion in fines for fraud**, with the trend being more fines each year, not less!

- One Darryl Woods, then CEO of a bank in Missouri, has admitted in court to using \$381,487 of TARP³⁹ funds his bank received to buy himself a house in Florida. “Using”. That's different than stealing, right?
- Here are some of the ways the banks find to swindle the public: 1) Wall Street banks store metals in warehouses, collecting rent and interest from the owners of the metals 2) In addition to oil refineries and natural gas fields, banks like Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley and JPMorgan Chase own and operate power plants, profiting from the utility bills paid by millions of U.S. consumers 3) Owning pipelines, fleets of tankers and loading dock companies lets the banks charge fees at various points along the delivery chain 4) By using their financial resources to buy large stores of oil, wheat, cotton and copper, Wall Street firms have made rich

³⁹ Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), that *account* that was set up to use the money then-Treasury Secretary Paulson extorted from the American people in 2008 at the point of the martial law gun...

profits from run-ups in commodities prices over the last decade 5) The huge growth of commodities index funds generates lucrative fees for Goldman, JPMorgan Chase and other investment houses 6) Banks like Goldman charge fees selling swaps and future contracts that allow investors to speculate on commodities and hedge risks 7) The surge of money the index funds attracted to commodities markets coincided with increased volatility. Those price swings give banks the opportunity for greater profits 8) Because they control the pipelines, shipping docks, tankers and warehouses, Wall Street firms have access to proprietary information that can help them anticipate and trade on price trends.⁴⁰ By the way, how is it that banks, **banks** mind you, own so many pipelines, power plants, commodities, derivatives, trains, and storage facilities? That would be the different flavors of *Quantitative Easing* as well as the ability to borrow money at zero percent interest: they have to do something with all that cash. The Federal Reserve expected they would lend it, creating money and jobs; instead, the moral hazard of *free money with no strings attached* has resulted in banks bidding up and buying assets rather than lending, and blowing new asset price bubbles in real estate, student loans, and bonds along the way.

⁴⁰ When it was announced [in Cyprus] that both large and small depositors were to have a percentage of their deposits seized, it was not the amount that horrified the world but the discovery that you do not own your own bank deposits... Thus the new term, *Cyprused*

- We find ourselves today in an unprecedented situation, when the economic news is bad: more people in poverty or losing their jobs, more people entering foreclosure and losing their homes; **because of these tragedies**, stocks gain in value. The expectation that bad news will force the Federal Reserve to continue its purchases of securities and bonds and thereby drive up asset prices leads people who are invested in the market, either through their retirement accounts or brokerage accounts, to cheer for other people's misfortune.
- Let's be clear: The IMF, World Bank, and other Central Bank bailouts of governments in deep debt are not about getting money into the social fabric of a poor nation. Rather, they are about control: control of resources at below market prices as quid pro quo, fire sale pricing of nationally-owned assets being sold to foreign investors as a condition for receiving a loan, or controlling which investors get repaid first. Note please that little if any of the bailout funding actually goes to the country that accepts repayment responsibility; this is the insidious heart of the matter. The money goes straight to the banks to repay previous loans, in effect refinancing the old debt at new, higher rates. At no time do the banks make *new* loans that might provide any support for poor people; this is why austerity measures (code for *less government spending*) are required. The government has a new, larger debt burden following the *bailout*; after all, **bailouts are not debt relief**. This is another example of how the system is twisted to protect those who already have resources, at the expense of

taxpayers and those people who are resource-poor. One of the newest methods of transferring wealth appeared in Cyprus: depositors were informed that their account balances would be taxed. Of course, they were told this **after** the banks had closed, for what turned out to be a ten-day period for the adjustment to take place. Imagine how they felt:

- “What’s really upset people is that **they’ve been lied to**. They were told that their money was safe and that they shouldn’t move it and then they announce this. Everyone’s accounts are frozen and the ATMs have no money. Some people are struggling to get enough cash together to buy food and water... [people] just feel that **they’ve been robbed by the Government**.” --Chris Drake (Former BBC Middle East correspondent, retired to Cyprus) [emphasis added]

- Law enforcement’s mindset has been hijacked by the post-9/11 belief that all levels of government can never have enough tools or firepower, which, in 2013 includes the ability to assemble digital dossiers on every American. And as NSA program after program after program continues to be disclosed (and lied about from officials at all levels of government and nearly every department or agency), it is clear that we have deep moral hazards, and that we are having a Constitutional Crisis. The militarization of our police, the surveillance upon every resident under fear of a breach of national *security*, and the power to influence legislators that has been gained by corporations in recent Supreme Court

decisions, leave us little choice but to resist, protest, and disobey if we are to uphold our foundational document and retain our rights, as Americans and as human beings. How would you have reacted if police had come to your door that April day following the Boston Marathon bombings? Would you have refused them entry? Or would you have meekly, and fearfully, placed your hands on your head and marched right through that door and into the line for a pat down performed by someone (unidentified, but wearing lots of body armor and camouflage) on the sidewalk outside your home?

- The hypocrisy of situational ethics: work to impeach Bush but not Obama? Pro-life **and** pro-death penalty? Pro-abortion **and** anti-death penalty? Doctors condoning or abetting torture? Supporting the troops while they are overseas but not after they return home? Would you tolerate China raining death from the skies over Omaha? Obama's Nobel Prize? What if Russia had been listening to every conversation Obama has had since becoming President? Would we be having a very different discussion about **empire** if there were British, or German, or Chinese, or Japanese military bases **within the borders of the USA**?
- When the people think that politics is a dead-end, that voting doesn't count, that corporations own government no matter who wins (different cheeks of the same ass face), then that is a huge moral hazard that can lead to an explosion of rage and end the system we *call* democracy. And if the rage stems instead primarily from poverty, then capitalism will be in the sights of the mobs. Both democracy and capitalism need

reform; the only real questions are what is a better system, and what will it take to push you past indifference and into actively working for change?

- When we allow someone to violate fundamental moral codes, we open ourselves up to a future of lower moral standards. We know that the Dalai Lama isn't guilty of terrorism, but we also know that some of America's drone strike victims weren't either. So if the Chinese government were to *take down* the man it regards as a dangerous separatist would it actually be acting to the lower level of American morality? How could we complain about that?
- Moral hazard has gotten to the point where crime pays. For example: Joseph Goebbels's heirs are billionaires. And the Barclays, the Chase, and the Bush families all made lots of money financing the Nazis. Then there's the Vatican, and the half billion they've still got left over from Mussolini. Mubarak's kids have over \$40 billion. Putin, alone, tops that. Gaddafi was worth \$200 billion, stashed outside Libya, and little of that will ever be repatriated. Most (if not all) of the US\$32 trillion hidden in offshore accounts was either acquired by hedge fund managers, dictators, drug lords and their bankers down at the Laundromat, or was hidden there by Americans to avoid paying their share of income taxes. A few may have gotten their money honestly; assuming that child labor, starvation wages, interest rate manipulation and such are legal, but none come to mind. And what have been the results of all this ill-gotten gain? In 2005, 11 million Americans were on food stamps. Today, after all the bailouts and Bernanke's five

years of *rescuing* the economy, more than 50 million are on food stamps, including more than a quarter of all American children⁴¹. Over 12 million are out of work or working part-time for lack of a real job. More than **75%** of the new jobs created since 2008 are low-wage jobs that pay less than \$13 per hour. Between 2009 and 2012, the lowest-earning **40%** of Americans saw their inflation-adjusted earnings **decline 6%**, and real median income dropped more than 8% overall; meanwhile, the top 1% enjoyed a 31% increase in their incomes. We've lost 5 million homes to foreclosure and another 5 million are behind on the mortgage. And corporate profits are at all-time highs.

- We have the stock market and corporate profits both at all-time highs, and yet job participation is the worst since 1979, and those who are working have jobs where inflation-adjusted wages are **worse** than in 1979. The moral hazard is this: what are we doing to our future, when we are wasting our human capital and destroying our shared human dreams? People deserve decent work in humane conditions for fair, living wages. Why is this so difficult?
- There is a surgical center in Oklahoma that charges roughly 20% of normal but it takes no insurance: payment has to be made in **cash only**. But if your deductible is 20%, then you pay the same and you have managed to cut out the profit that goes to insurance company. Odd how that works, huh! Let's also point to other aspects of moral hazard that were introduced to health

⁴¹ Let's not forget: food stamps provide (fiscal year 2014) \$1.40 per person per meal

care when it became *for profit* in the 1960s: insurance companies profit only when they collect premiums but don't pay out for services, meaning they profit when they can deny you coverage; premiums also have to cover administrative and advertising costs that have nothing to do with medical services. The presence of shareholders makes profit the only concern, not health; and we have a system now drug companies and doctors only profit when you are medicated or cut into, instead of one that seeks to maintain your health as its only goal. And this brings to mind how we already have *death panels*, which is a euphemism for the decision making process in insurance companies that decide how much life-sustaining care a dying person can receive. The term death panel was used to challenge single-payer medical care, proposed by many in 2009 and 2010 as part of health care reform, by claiming that it is intolerable that someone would make life-or-death decisions based on economics, despite the fact that this is already the case in the current, for-profit model.

- And it is hard to make a profit on new drugs unless you can convince the public the drugs are safe. Unlucky for U.S. corporations: they would be liable for damages if they were to unsuccessfully test a new concoction on Americans; lucky for them they can go overseas where recompense and liability laws are much weaker or even non-existent. In the last 7 years (before 2012), as many as **2,600 human guinea pigs Indian volunteers have died** during drug trials run by Bayer, Novartis and the rest. Another 12,000 suffered "serious adverse

events”. Only 17 of 475 drugs tested ended up being approved for marketing. Talk about moral hazard...maybe American CEOs get such big salaries because they have to ignore what they are directing their companies to do to human beings in the pursuit of profit.

“Throw a few chairmen of the board in jail for polluting the air and water, and you’ll see pollution disappear quite rapidly... you also would probably see some pretty drastic prison reforms.” Fortney
“Pete” Stark

A particular newsworthy topic as I write this book is the Edward Snowden/NSA scandal. I like to investigate this because it has so many layers of complexity, and reveals so much about what stories we choose to believe. It highlights how language can be perverted to one’s own ends: the whole *treason* or *hero* debate, for instance. To be clear, let’s define our terms first. Treason is not the right word. Seditious is: The Oxford Dictionary definition of treason is: “the crime of betraying one’s country, especially by attempting to kill the sovereign or overthrow the government,” whereas, seditious is: “conduct or speech inciting people to rebel against the authority of a state or monarch.” Why use the word *treason*? Clearly it is meant to strike fear in our hearts; and to marshal our support against an enemy of the state. Recently our government has used this fear of attack by outsiders as the basis to fund military interventions around the globe, as well as to circumvent certain constitutional protections in the name of *fighting terror*. To call Mr. Snowden’s disclosures *seditious* wouldn’t fit into the government’s story as it has been spun in the 21st century, and given the state of our educational systems, our citizens would likely fail to

understand the act he is charged with perpetrating if they were to use that word. It might also get them to questioning the efficacy of the concept to “...**incite me to rebel?**” Let’s be clear: the crime divulged by Edward Snowden (and many others before him) is invading the privacy of more than 300 million Americans; the criminals are the NSA and the Administrations of G. W. Bush and B. Obama; and Edward Snowden is being charged with merely **confirming what we already knew**. There is even a (small) possibility that he is a *limited hangout*, meaning he is still working for the NSA, and his sole purpose is to distract us from something else even more insidious that authorities want us to miss.

What do we know from our history about secrecy? Our Founding Fathers set up a government that was afraid of the power of government; with the various branches of government meant to serve in balancing the power so that no one person could rule as a dictator. Now we have a government that is **afraid of the power of the people**, and that will do anything from murder to secrecy, to maintain power and prevent the people from recognizing what power they ultimately hold. Now we have an executive branch that has taken over the authority to declare war from Congress, and that claims the ability to imprison and even execute citizens without judicial sanction: actions that move us closer to that day when one man rules unquestioned. It is expeditious to that end if actions can be undertaken without public scrutiny, in other words, let’s just keep what we are doing a secret, OK? No one can complain about what they don’t know. Along this vein, the government has so far managed to prevent judicial review of these policies by not allowing anyone to bring up the matter unless they can prove they have been harmed by the secrecy. In classic Catch-22 fashion, you have to pierce the secrecy

in order to know you have been hurt, in order to stop the secrecy.

And what can we glean from the history of others? Those who lived under Gestapo, KGB, and/or Stasi regimes have a most fundamental abhorrence of wholesale, blanket, information gathering and storage. It is hard to make the argument that *no harm, no foul* when the data will live forever, subject to the whims of now-unforeseen employees. Who knows what will constitute a *crime* in the eyes of any future administration? Even if you and I are not acquainted, if your cell phone and my cell phone visit the same coffee shop at overlapping times a couple of times a week and you do something NSA doesn't like, **I and all my friends** will go on a list of *probable co-conspirators*. That's what results from the magic of massive analysis of massive amounts of data stored about everyone: our on-line habits (did we visit the same website?), our email and cellphone calls (OMG, you know Sally, too?), the stores we shop in, what we buy in those stores, libraries we visit and the books we check out, our online purchases, and where we go; every detail that can be gleaned from our cell phones and internet connections. We used to call this process *guilt by association*, now we just care about *association*; **guilt is assumed**. It will be interesting to see how our government placates our fears; if indeed that is possible. And governments, including some agencies here in America and many abroad, have reacted as you might expect to news that the data-gathering has included not only their emails and phone calls, but literal eavesdropping within their own government buildings and on their highest government officials.

Secrets are power: we keep secrets about ourselves from others in order to prevent them from having power over us; and we want to know secrets about others in

order to have power over them. A government or financial institution that has information about your plans and ideas is more able to thwart those plans or benefit from their foreknowledge. When I mention *J. Edgar Hoover*, what is the first *secret* you remember about him? Oh yeah, that he kept dossiers on political and business figures, the better to blackmail them with. We used to value whistleblowers; we even passed whistleblower protection laws, demonstrating that given our rule of law, anyone seeing a crime is obligated to report it. It is still law that soldiers seeing what might be a war crime are obliged to report it; little good that did Bradley Manning though. Prior to his release of military and diplomatic information, the most infamous challenge to secrecy in my lifetime had been the Pentagon Papers. Mr. Ellsberg managed to get enough public support on his side to remain free himself; why have we become so afraid of truth that we stand by while those who release information about illegal and immoral acts go to jail today? Why aren't we standing up for those who do the right thing by disclosing illegal acts?

A common belief that I hear from friends, even from those who are progressive in many other aspects of their worldview, is, "I don't have anything to hide, let them store my information." Unfortunately, this is naïve at best, ignorant at worst. If that is truly the case, then you should have no compunctions about giving me all of your usernames and passwords, and the PINs to all of your credit and debit cards. And while you are writing that down for me, let me install this app on your phone that allows me to listen to the ambient noise and your conversations, even if your phone is turned off, since the government can do that without even using an app. Suddenly people start to understand that when nothing is private, we all have things we would rather hide. How can we be sure that our devices don't hide software that

allows our cameras and microphones to incriminate us? Who gets to decide what constitutes incriminating evidence?

Even your financial plans cannot be kept *secret*; banks routinely monitor orders to buy or sell stocks and bonds, and jump in front of certain transactions in order to make money off this knowledge before your order hits the market. This helps explain why financial sector profits now comprise nearly half of all corporate profit in the United States: they are benefiting from processes they have largely kept secret from the investing public. Numerous studies consistently show that insider trading is rife among our stock and bond markets and other asset transactions as well. High frequency and algorithmic trading: trading done by computers, not people, and based on trends, incoming orders, insider information, or breaking news; means that the typical **individual investor stands no chance**. And here again, as most of the actual data-gathering is being done by corporations, not governments, it should be clear that there can be no effective firewall that prevents info gathered through unconstitutional surveillance from creating profit for capitalist businesses. Just having a retirement account usually means paying a few percent in fees each year, so we already start the year in the hole. These fees syphon off the bulk of the account value before we tap into our retirement accounts after a few decades. None of the major banks lose money from their day-to-day, proprietary accounts; and when it does happen for some rare reason, think **London Whale**, it is because they got so greedy that they worked themselves into an untenable position. In that particular case too, in 2012, other traders discovered their risky bet and then **actively worked to make them pay**. Companies that will be greatly impacted by changing governmental policies are often traded heavily before

the changes are announced. If your Congressional representatives are involved, don't you want to know? Just to be clear, Congress members are **specifically exempt from insider trading** restrictions. Analysis of trades in stocks most likely to be affected by various (US sponsored) third-world coups strongly suggests that insiders knew about the pending overthrows and invested appropriately. Who is leaking that info, and why? If banks are *stealing* profits from your market trades, don't you want to know? If a local politician is compromised, don't you want an investigative journalist to report that fact, without fear of going to jail for failing to reveal his sources?

It appears that we live in denial: denying that there will be any negative impact on our lives by the growing extent of government spying. What do we choose not to see? Why are we so unable to let the truth be spoken, why must we hide behind *secrecy*, why do we believe that the citizens will be swayed, or outraged, by the reality of what is being done in their name? And if in fact they would be outraged, who gets to decide that outrageous behavior is what the government will do, despite its being immoral? This denial can have dire consequences. In the famous play, "*A Man for All Seasons*," Sir Thomas More, Chancellor of England, asks: "*So, you would have me to cut down the law in order to chase after devils? And what will we do, with the law cut down, when the devil turns on us?*"

Increasingly too, we suffer from secrecy concerning the definition of the words that are used in writing the laws we are to live by. There is the *Patriot Act* for instance, a public document that describes certain powers the government now claims are *legal* that used to be considered unconstitutional. But there also exists, although it is kept secret from the public, a document that explains how the words in the Patriot Act will be

defined and construed by the government. Thus white is now black, slavery is now freedom, and murder is now security. This other document, the one that the government will use in justification of its many acts, is never voted on or approved, in fact few even know it exists and only a handful of people can read it. Yet it allows spokespeople to claim, “What we are doing is legal” even as those actions are highly immoral and unethical. Legal is not the same as moral, Constitutional, or even logical. Many conversations, twitter feeds, Facebook postings, or email chains used to vacuum up dissidents and protestors are termed *legal* because of approvals granted by a secret court⁴². Those approvals are never disclosed, and the few leaked examples prove that even when shown to the people with the highest of security clearances, the approvals are heavily redacted: secrecy about secrecy even to those who are in on the secret! Courts have ruled that revealing the people who have been subject to this warrantless surveillance “*would violate their privacy*”, and that those suing to stop this type of surveillance *lack standing* since they can’t prove they have been subjected to anything unconstitutional; again, this insidious Catch-22! Even worse, some citizens sued in federal court demanding to be shown the *secret* memo that justifies an American President executing by drone American citizens. Judge McMahon refused their request, citing “*...the thicket of laws and precedents that effectively allow the executive branch of our government to proclaim as perfectly lawful certain actions that seem on their face incompatible with our Constitution and laws while keeping their conclusion a secret.*” The *thicket of laws*

⁴² Over the first four years of this secret court, it denied 11 requests out of 32,000, according to information the government released following a FOIA request in 2012.

she is pointing to includes the Patriot Act, the Military Commissions Act, the National Defense Authorizations Act and others; all were passed by both parties and Congress, and signed by both Republican and Democratic Presidents.

Truth-telling can have life-changing consequences: one of Malcolm X's bodyguards was asked, "What was it that made you willing to lay down your life for him (Malcolm X)?" His answer: "*He was honest; he never lied... and he was sincere in what he was trying to do...*" Nothing there about plans for revolution, or projects that the bodyguard believed in, his motivation only centered on what type of **human being** Malcolm X was.

When programs are secret, they are unaccountable; and unaccountable programs are ripe for abuse. And when James Clapper, in March 2013, can boldly and plainly lie to Congress and the American people about the extent to which the NSA gathers intelligence about us all without penalty...it makes a mockery of the system now euphemistically called *justice*. There are two and a half million people in American prisons today; fully one-quarter of all of the planet's prisoners, and meanwhile torturers sit on the federal bench, executive branch officials lie to Congress with impunity, and bank executives at nearly all managerial levels and above commit fraud and theft solely to feed their greed. What will it take to wake us up and make the changes to bring America back to the place *we think it is*? Fascism, which we fought in WWII, combines corporate collusion with the government to abuse fundamental rights (internet companies being paid via secret government contracts to disclose customer information), with xenophobia (creating an *enemy* out of other races) and militarism (I hope I don't have to explain this one!) to wage international war, and propaganda to brainwash and distract the population and hide what is really going

on. Fascism is not always about gas chambers; and it is gaining a foothold in America today. We look with scorn on Germans who say they didn't see fascism coming in the 1930s; how are we different today?

Secrecy is another word for fear. Secrecy poisons any relationship. When the truth is vilified, hunted, gagged and jailed, then the State has chosen to go to war with its own people. And make no mistake about it: today, in America, we citizens are at war with our government...hence the title of this book. Former Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General James Cartwright has been named by the Justice Department as their target in an investigation concerning the leaking of information about the Stuxnet computer malware the US used to disable about 1,000 Iranian centrifuges. The Iranians knew we had done it, **but the public wasn't supposed to know.**

Lies don't always arise from a malicious intent to hide a profit motive; they might just arise from taking a very limited perspective. Look at terror, for instance. A common answer as to why terrorists attack America is very questionable, and journalist Glen Greenwald rejects that oft-given answer: "*They hate us for our freedom.*"

"People are very cynical about that answer and realize that's not really the reason. When [terrorists] are heard, which is rare, about what their motive was, invariably they cite the fact that they have become so enraged by what Americans are doing to Muslims around the world, to their countries in terms of bombing them, imprisoning them without charges, drone attacking them, interfering in their governments, propping up their dictators, that they feel that they have not only the right, but the duty to attack America back."

We can get bogged down in the polarities and miss the root of the problem. It might feel *good* to think that we Americans are exceptional, and that everyone wants to live like we do. It might stoke our egos to think that we are hated because we have something others want. But it has been decades since the photos of what was happening to civilians in Vietnam graced our television screens on each evening's newscasts; cameras are barred from photographing returning caskets from Afghanistan today, and no embedded reporter would dream of publishing photos of the deaths of innocents. That doesn't mean that the ugly truth of what is happening does not exist, only that we will not add it into our calculus of the worth of a particular action, of the morality of a particular decision, or how much treasure we are willing to spend manning military bases in more than half of the countries around the world. For another example of how we fail to look deeply into what is going on, and at the roots of any dysfunction, look at the gun debate. Some argue that there aren't enough guns in the places that need them; that if everyone carried, no one could get away with a mass shooting. Others say that gun access is too easy; that if we make it hard to get guns or ammo, then we will prevent mass shootings. Still more say that there are already too many guns, both legal and illegal, for there to ever be any meaningful control mechanism. A small minority fringe element even dares to ask if it is the **police** who have too many guns. None of these perspectives bothers to ask, "Why do people shoot other people? What can we do to eliminate the intense sense of alienation that allows someone to kill another?"

Another aspect of secrecy concerns our economic model. Our society does an extremely poor job of educating us about this *art*; it is far from a science, obviously, since there are so many conflicting opinions

about how to structure our ability to specialize and trade goods and services with others⁴³. While secrecy may not be inherent in all economies, it has certainly become a big part of this one today. Capitalism is based on a highly toxic extractive process that turns *free* resources and energy into capital, for the benefit of those who have the most capital to begin with. It is precisely this foundation built upon extraction that cannot continue forever on a finite planet, supplying endless capital as the population soars. The only discussion that is needed or helpful today is this: what comes after capitalism, and can we start to build that system today? It is impossible to design the system that replaces capitalism, and then designate one day on which we all change. But it is abundantly clear that this system, based on greed and a sense of self that is focused on what *this isolated unit that I am* can take from others, neither meshes well with our planet, nor includes our more generous and altruistic tendencies as human beings. I am sure you can think of times when you have been greedy, and yet you can also remember times when you were generous with no possibility of reward; in many cases, including risking your life for another whom you had never even met. How is it that we are satisfied with a system that fails to recognize what is, in my view and likely yours, the most important aspect of our inherent nature? We can begin to build on this idea of rewarding people for their empathy and compassion and altruism while simultaneously withdrawing our support and energy from the capitalist model that must die if we are to live. It is hard to say it any better; and yes there can be examples given or stories told that illustrate how this

⁴³ If you want more information about economies, please read my book, *“What Color Is Your Sky”*, available at www.derekjoetennant.net

can work, but the truth is that if you balance your thoughts and emotions and thus open your heart to what is possible, that small inner voice will lead you to use your energy in action in the world in ways that build the very structures that we need right now. Your experiences lead to new ideas and spark something in those who witness what you are modeling; the structure grows. This is how nature works: an evolution of ideas and actions changes the energy that is manifest. Nothing stays the same, and as we inevitably change, let's focus on what we do want so that our actions bring about the world our hearts know is possible.

The claim that capitalism makes: that when people *own* resources, they will take care of them out of self-interest and for profit, is fatally flawed. How can that idea apply to the aspects of life that we have no choice over, like water or air for instance? How can someone own ~~all~~ any of our water? They didn't make it! And the result of believing that an owner will care for something out of self-interest manifests as a belief in *the market*^{*}; or in the claim that allowing trade to happen freely among people will always find the solution to any problem by letting the market set the cost of the best solution and then allowing those who need the solution to pay that price. We get into issues of what is *free* and equitable information and control through monopoly and even that fact that the market works by a defined set of rules, and whoever controls the rules controls the market, so there can never be a totally *free* market anyway. Capitalism insists that humans cannot manage anything collectively; yet we have done exactly that throughout most of our history. It insists that we are competitive beasts when we are also capable of, and happier, functioning out of compassion and care instead. So what does it look like when we assimilate these ideas into our thinking? If there is no market

solution that will solve market-caused problems, then cap-and-trade is no use, and a carbon tax is no use. What is useful would be a collectively determined cap on the burning of carbon, at what would be horrendously low levels compared to today, if done right. And that would mean two things immediately: we have to be able to discuss rationally, without rancor or slanderous attacks, the idea of rationing while at the same time dealing with the reality that our current American lifestyle is the one that most needs to be radically cut back. This would mean the end of our economy as currently built. We are stuck between business-as-usual with its likely end of our inhabitable climate, or rapidly dismantling the economy based on capital and property and building an alternative that is focused on holding as many of our resources in a commons, for the benefit of all regardless of their ability or desire to *work* as work is currently defined. And it will mean having to deal with the breaking of the promises of entitlement: no more Social Security, Medicare⁴⁴, pension-fueled or individual retirement accounts with income generated by stocks and bonds that allows rest and relaxation during decades of *golden years* for some, and the social safety net with subsidized food and housing for others. How will you feel when the safety net fails as you are using it? Will you be angry and active, resentful and sullen, or resigned and regretful?

Our government will do anything from secrecy to murder to maintain its grasp on power and prevent the

⁴⁴ Social Security, Medicare, and our social safety net programs are the price of capitalism's inequities. Demanding that we protect Social Security and Medicare from being cut or abolished is demanding that an inequitable system remain in place. Better to end income inequality, honor caregivers, and live in community rather than isolation.

people from recognizing how much power they ultimately hold. Are we being cowed by a government whose only effective way to prevent *wrongdoing* is by using militarized police? Are any laws enforced anymore without resorting to prison, water cannons or tear gas? What does a just and fair police force look like? And who should be able to decide which force we live with? Are we so frightened of what *might* happen that we can't even begin to question the current narrative or the authorities who tell us what we can and cannot do?

The world we live in now is monopolized by greed, legal fraud and moral decay. What is on the line here is the notion that humans can govern themselves. Our current tendency to make everything secret, as if we *cannot handle the truth*, stems from one of two premises: 1) there is something being done that must be hidden because it is immoral and would cost the authorities respect and obedience, or 2) a belief that the average person is unable to think for themselves and thus make good decisions. How can this continue? Why do we ignore what our ~~lying~~ eyes show us? Is it because we:

- believe we are entitled to demand more
- lack a clear understanding of changes, and of tipping points
- focus on distractions
- lack an ability to question our system
- trust in technological advancement to ultimately save the day
- respond to advertising and propaganda and don't mind being manipulated
- cannot imagine a force greater than *human ingenuity*
- carry an illusion of unlimited resources
- trust in unlimited growth

Why might the truth be more threatening?

Today's American society carries emotional baggage, unfulfilled wishes, assumptions, some bad memories, some amnesia about history, fears, resentments, and grievances. We have accepted globalization, the importation of our food and consumer goods, as progress or a sign of our *development*. Look at what makes economies⁴⁵ thrive: extracting raw materials, making products from those materials, or producing food. If we think that the focus of our efforts to address climate change rest on narrowing our consumption and activity to our local neighborhood, then it is logical to think that a similar relocalization of our economy would be in order.

“Our cities and towns have been "designed" to accommodate automobiles - not public transport or our own two feet -, our homes have been built where we need automobiles to reach them, once we're inside, these homes need huge amounts of energy to heat and cool, and we fill them with stuff that was mostly produced far away and transported using huge amounts of energy.

“None of this is necessary, we could have been much smarter about it all, but we haven't. This is true to such an extent that if tomorrow we would drop our energy use by even just 25%, let alone 50%, our present economic models wouldn't survive. Our economies are designed around the principle that we use much more energy than we really need, that we drive cars and reside in

⁴⁵ At least economies as currently structured, which is based on the creation of money through debt, and a self-defined *need* for profit. There **are** alternative ways to structure an economy.

homes that use no more than 10% or so of the effective energy we put in (and no, wind or solar don't solve these issues; they can be useful, but not until we snap out of the present paradigm).

This is the blueprint we have used to construct our societies, and it guarantees that we will buy into more pipedreams, ever more desperately as we go along.” Raul Ilargi Meijer

This is a blunt question: what makes you *entitled* to live the American Dream, consuming 25% of the world's resources and generating 30% of its trash, while simultaneously incarcerating 25% of the world's prisoners and consuming 66% of all the anti-depressant drugs manufactured? Accident of birth? Racial superiority? Inherited wealth? Freedom/Democracy? And if actually, none of these entitle you to anything beyond some basic human rights, then how can we change the system so that the three billion people not now sharing in this abundance can finally have their rights respected?

We think we have everything we need to live our American dream⁴⁶. We remain unaware of the transportation that is involved to bring us our *stuff*, be it food or goods. Stop and think for a moment; where will you get your next drink of water if the pipes break in

⁴⁶ We tend to believe that it is easier to use toxic processes to extract oil from someone else's land, transport it to a refinery where we make it into plastic, transport the plastic to a factory that makes it a particular shape, transport that product to a store so we can drive there and buy it and bring it home and use it for eating dinner, after which we will throw it into a can outside our home where it will be picked and taken to a landfill where it will last forever, again on someone else's land, **all so we don't have to wash a metal spoon**. This is a small portion of the *American Dream*.

an earthquake? Where will you get food if the power is out and your plastic cards can't be debited? What will you eat if the grocery store hasn't been restocked for several days because the drivers are on strike demanding overdue paychecks? And given that more than 90% of the world's transportation is possible due to liquid fuels refined from oil, where we are today and where we are headed in the next few decades is inherently tied to the concept of *Peak Oil*. Even the *doomers* who predict that civilization will collapse because of our inability, at some future time, to get oil into our vehicles usually concede that lots of oil remains in the ground. Their argument is not that we will run out of oil, but that the oil will continue, as it has over several decades, to become harder to extract as the easy-to-get resources are used up, and more expensive to extract, both in monetary terms as well as in the amount of energy required during the process. *EROEI*; energy returned on energy invested is a critical measure of the cost to run our economy. It used to take one barrel of oil to get 100 out of the ground, when the extraction was as simple as drilling 20 feet under our feet. Now that we have to reach under a mile of water and several more miles of rock, as in the Gulf of Mexico, we get more like 6 or 8 barrels of output for each barrel of input. And the jury is out on such *unconventional* sources of oil like *tight oil* (oil trapped in shale rocks) or tar sands; it is clear that the return will be less than five barrels output, and possibly as low as one. And the problem is not just about the energy input required; in June 2013 tight oil production in the U.S. cost \$500 per barrel, a big part of the reason why prices for gasoline remain high despite the alleged *glut* of oil⁴⁷. Ethanol made from corn has

⁴⁷ One other problem: depletion. It took 20 years for the Alaskan Slope and the North Sea deposits to begin their

been touted as being a cleaner alternative to oil, yet when you factor in the energy needed to grow the corn and then process corn and gas together, it actually **takes more energy input than we get** when we use the product. That is hardly something we would do in a *sane world*, but we will continue to make ethanol as long as the corn lobby in Washington D.C. remains strong.

Marx argued that *economy* is about the struggle between capital and labor. Yet growth has been charted that far exceeds what can be explained using just these two factors. The primary missing ingredient is energy; in fact, once you factor in energy and examine the resulting growth, you see that technology improvements matter little. Yes, capital increases its share of profits by cutting labor costs, but a large part of all productivity gains and resulting profit comes from increasing production using energy, not labor. What happens when energy costs soar? And if the market controls the economy, what is important is who controls the market: the big petroleum companies benefit if cars continue to achieve 20 mpg; consumers benefit at 100 mpg. Today we have 20, limiting disposable income and a major effect of that is the trailing effects of a decrease in the availability of jobs and the creation of poverty-engendered conditions. We could have 100, **but we are not in charge**. Yet.

Think of the energy curve of our society as if it is represented by the Sierra Nevada mountains. The land is green and lush following the winter rains on the side that faces the Pacific Ocean; the valley below is productive as the snowpack melts each spring and summer; but cross the peaks and as you come down the

decline in production, 3 years before the hydro-fracking natural gas wells are nearly dry, and after only 2 years tight oil wells have depleted 80% of their flow.

other side, dry conditions, sandy and rocky soil make it hard to grow anything. One wishes that some water had been allowed to get over the top to ease the lives of those who live on the Nevada-side valley floor. Increasing domestic energy consumption in Saudi Arabia will reduce the amount of petroleum that country's large oil fields will have available for export by 3 million barrels a day in 2020. That's a 30% reduction in their exports. By the same date, Chinese petroleum consumption is expected to increase by 6 million barrels a day. Where will we find oil to replace these 9 million barrels? And don't say "from the US oil shale bonanza", for by 2017 the US will max out in production and begin to decline. Mark your calendar, and get ready: the impact on the US economy will be... **inconvenient**. The IMF says the simplest way to combat global warming would be to **stop the \$1.9 trillion a year direct and indirect subsidies given to fossil fuel producers**. The report also strongly endorsed levying "appropriate carbon taxes" on greenhouse gas emissions. These steps could reduce CO2 emissions by over 10% a year, reduce air pollution and associated health costs, and strengthen the finances of many poor countries, and they will never happen.

The prudent course would be to decide how best to use the remaining oil deposits in a transition to a new system that is sustainable. Save some of what we know we have for the other side of the mountain, to use the metaphor of the Sierras. Cushion our fall is another way of saying it. We've come from the first Fossil Fuel Age, coal, into the second, oil. Now it is time to move into the third. But it is unlikely that the third energy age will be *renewables*; it is more likely to be termed *unconventional*. The world's oil companies spent **\$2.4 trillion** between 2005 to 2010 on petroleum exploration and development, a period of time the last

half of which saw oil prices rise from their historic \$20-\$30 per barrel price to mostly over \$90. That investment resulted in a **decrease** in the rate of oil production of 200,000 barrels per day. What will it take to continue to increase our access to oil in order to match our increasing demand? What will happen if we can't get enough?

Many analyses of this issue miss some obvious problems (or perhaps just assume they won't be problems). First is that extremely painful adjustments will be required, and many people who have lived high on the energy hog will not go along willingly. Can you spell *unrest*? Second, a bigger problem is that everyone assumes the financial system will continue to supply plenty of capital for the construction of renewable-energy infrastructure, but the financial system as we know it has been built and powered by the highly concentrated energy of fossil fuels. Net energy decline is already crippling economies and financial systems, here and abroad. Despite all the propaganda about a *recovery*, virtually nothing is getting fixed; debt keeps accumulating at a rate more than double the rate of economic growth, and now even the BRICS⁴⁸ are struggling. The oil-powered economic growth rates we have enjoyed in the past will never return, and if one understands that high economic growth rates are needed to generate lots of capital, it's obvious that, going forward, less money will be available for infrastructure financing. Third, it takes a lot of energy to build and deploy the hardware for renewable-energy infrastructure. That energy is not only expensive, but also must be deducted from what economies would ordinarily use to power other economic activities. That

⁴⁸ Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa; all so-called *2nd World* nations, and rising economies

helps elevate the prices of, for example, gasoline and jet fuel. Fourth, what about educating and training the engineers and skilled workers who design, manufacture, install, run, and maintain renewable-energy infrastructure? That too requires much energy, yet already schools are running up against budgetary constraints so severe that in some places teachers must buy supplies for their pupils with their own money. Does that sound like a recipe for training a new generation of engineers and skilled workers? Fifth, most of our transportation uses energy from liquid fuels, not batteries. It would take over ten years, even if we were to ban gasoline-powered engines today, to switch out even half of the existing infrastructure to some other energy source. We can't just ban the engines; people have to have time to wear out their older vehicles, and then switch to something new. And sixth, don't get me started on corn-based ethanol! Pouring food into a gas tank so that you can burn fuel that is 10% cleaner is no solution to anything, except as another way to move taxpayer dollars via subsidies to farmers in the American Midwest. In Thailand, they make and sell ethanol, but it comes from sweet potatoes. It burns cleaner than ethanol made from corn, gives better performance, is cheaper, and yes, it is still putting food into a gas tank. But it only took that country 3 years to build out the infrastructure for selling liquid natural gas and liquid propane for cars, and the ethanol is being introduced through existing gasoline stations. It is **25% of the cost of gasoline and gets about 90% of the mileage**, and is grown without the government subsidy corn enjoys in the U.S. too, so you can understand why American corporations would be loath to see it catch on here. In 2013 they began rolling out a *flavor* of ethanol in 2013 that uses only 20% gasoline; ethanol sold in the U.S. still uses 85% gas. Every new car there, including

American Fords and Chevys, that have been sold in the last ten years have been required to be *flex fuel*, meaning able to burn many kinds of fuel, not just high-octane gasoline. The point is, there are alternatives, and even good ones that we don't hear about in America because it is not in the interests of our corporate masters. What will it take for us common people to begin to get our voices heard? How can we wrest back the power to decide what products we want?

Hype about shale gas has enabled the companies that *frack* to make money; not on the gas, but on flipping land leases to unsuspecting, duped, buyers. It costs far more than the gas pays to frack... this is just another **real estate bubble**. It helps that we turn a blind eye to the amount of water it takes, the contamination of aquifers, the high rate of depletion, the classic boomtown/collapse cycle, the outright propaganda about a *secure energy future*, the people who shower in the dark because they fear that a spark from the light bulb might ignite the methane in the water coming out of their tap due to nearby fracking, and the low EROEI. We are saying, "Demand is high, we need more sources of energy". We should be saying, "Our supplies are drying up, how can we lower our demand?"

While the basis for the claim that fracking promises renewed abundance and energy independence is not borne out by the evidence, the purpose of the disinformation campaign is two-fold: 1) to persuade policymakers and the public to open more public lands to fossil fuel exploration while relaxing environmental regulations, and 2) to convince both groups that because energy abundance is returning soon, no changes in the current structure of energy production and distribution need to be made. In other words, the technical-corporate-financial energy elite that currently controls the bulk of the world's energy supply should remain

intact and in charge. Nothing to see here, move along folks. Go back to your distractions...

Environmental activists have made the idea of *renewable energy* a buzzword in recent years. But when we delve into the reality of what it would take to switch off of coal and oil and to supposed *green* technologies for energy, real dysfunction becomes apparent. **Even *green memes* have inherent inconsistencies:** Yes, Canada's oil sands production is one of the most carbon-intensive sources of crude in the world, but coal-fired power plants in just the state of Wisconsin produce nearly as much CO₂. Yes, mining of the oil sands should cease. So should burning coal. It does no good, from an environmental point of view, to drive an electric car if you are going to recharge the battery using power that comes from a coal-fired generating plant. And the batteries required for energy storage; at your home or business or in your car, use metals that are mined using methods and toxic chemicals as horrific for the environment as the methods used for coal. Windmills also need oil for their manufacture and transportation to their ultimate site; at least as our current system operates. Both wind and solar require huge capital input and will cover lots of land in order to supply even a small fraction, say 20%, of our total energy usage; today they account for barely two. Some activists have taken up the banner of nuclear power, touting it as a *green* bridge to some renewable energy future. Ignoring the issues of peak uranium, waste disposal, insurance costs, construction costs, and profitability, I point to just the problems of decommissioning and accidents as deal-breakers. Decommissioning for most of the nearly 500 nuclear plants around the world will involve merely closing the gates, locking the doors, and hoping for the best. For a few decades of electricity we'll have thousands of years

of contamination, sickness, death, and of course plenty of mayhem as evil people try to get the waste to make nuclear devices and dirty bombs. We build these plants near water so it will be easy to cool the reactors; but for some silly reason we did not make them *waterproof*, as evidenced by what happened at the Daiichi plant in Japan in 2011. We came within a foot of having a similar issue at the nuclear plant in New Jersey during the storm surge from Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Here again, science fails us: we fail to imagine as we design these life-critical processes, the many ways our best-laid plans can fail; and we cannot accurately pinpoint how much radiation is acceptable. Is it safe to eat highly-radioactive fish, cows, rice, or vegetables? In late 2013, we still don't know where three of the Daiichi cores **are**, because the radiation *kills* even the robots they have used to try to get a picture from inside the containments. It is impossibly terrifying to think about what those reactors will look like 100 years from now. Or what we will look like, for that matter. Would you commend your child to learn the technical expertise needed to operate one of the GE Mark I reactors like those at Fukushima; more than 20 of which are running in the U.S. today? And if you wouldn't for whatever reason: fear of their dying in a nuclear accident, fear that the technology won't operate long enough to last their entire career, fear that the pay isn't enough for your *baby*, then **whose child should** learn about them so that we don't have 24 hotspots or exclusion zones in America 100 years from now? Just these issues, until we come up with a better, safer way of doing nuclear power, are enough to make any suggestion of it being the key to our future an absolutely insane idea.

We are witnessing the unforeseen consequences of more than three hundred years of decision making

intent on isolating each of us and making us feel responsible for our own wellbeing. It is a mighty task: understanding how these dysfunctions came to be. It is daunting to see the depth of the changes required if we are to be truly free to live lives full of love and grace. This, then, is our challenge: to right our moral compass and to begin to act, each and every moment, as if who we are matters. And where are the public spaces where we can have this debate? Even our *publically-owned* space is subject to rules and regulations that prevent its use without prior approval of the government: the police state now limits crowd size, demands permits, requires an insurance policy, prohibits amplified sound, etc. How does this support our access to truth?

To paraphrase something that Charles Eisenstein has written:

Do you have a sense that there is something deeply wrong in the world, something that is right in front of our faces, yet that we are **too blind to see**? Are there really ultra-intelligent, ultra-competent people on top whose plans for global dominance actually work and whose technologies actually succeed in molding the world to their plans? Or are the elites of our civilization just as confused and scared as the rest of us, responding to events that, at every turn, take on a life of their own? **The futility of control is written into the fabric of reality.** Complex non-linear systems such as a body or a society are inherently unpredictable. Of course, those in power try to maintain control and often wreak awful damage in so doing, but generally speaking it is events that control *them*, and not the other way around. I have noticed that conspiracy theories have a very strong emotional appeal, at least to some people. Believers like to

think that they are impartially choosing their belief because they are more rational, more intelligent, or more open-minded than all those benighted, deluded *sheeple* out there. Two people can look at the same set of facts and yet draw completely different conclusions. Is that choice a function of intelligence and reason? Or could it be that we choose interpretations to meet our own psychological and emotional needs? Among the psychological payoffs of a conspiracy theory is that it provides someone to blame, to hate, and perhaps to fight in a world of otherwise **incomprehensible injustice and horror**.

Paradoxically, even though it casts us as victims of super-powerful conspirators, it also provides a kind of control. After all, if the source of evil in the world today is the conspirators, then the solution is quite clear: expose them and remove or jail them. If there is no conspiracy: if, for instance, evil is endemic to the world or an emergent property of organizations; then we are even more helpless.

Has the left allowed morality to slip away because they equate it with fundamentalism? Has the right let morality slip away because it gets in the way of making money? Why have you and I let morality slip away? Is it out of comfort, convenience, apathy, or to foster our own schemes and manipulations? What are we to do about this loss of morality, in any case?

The best thing about WikiLeaks was that it offered us documents without any filters; we are left to look at the source information and draw our own conclusions rather than be told what to think about what has been disclosed. But many of us don't want that responsibility,

we prefer to sit back and do what we are told, react as we are instructed to react. This stepping outside of the power grid by WikiLeaks is what has been the most dangerous aspect of *whistleblowing*, not the actual leaks themselves. WikiLeaks has essentially transferred power to the people, a hideous crime. This leads many to finally awaken to what the power structure has managed to accomplish following decades of oppression; we begin to see *truth*. Our corporate ruling class, who after all own both the citizens and the government of this country, don't want the curtain to be pulled back exposing their techniques and their lies to the light of day. Unmasking their secrets is the only way to stop them; that explains the great lengths to which they will go to stop the truth from being revealed. But stop them we must; our lives yours and mine, depend on it.

Accounting fraud, mortgage fraud, tax fraud; product fraud; investment fraud; lies and cover-ups; how much corruption can we bear before we lose our belief in authority? What does it look like if we no longer trust banks, or governments, or a business's books? How close are you to losing **your** trust in these authority structures? The virtual is not the equivalent of the real; fiat is not the same as actual; paper profit is no profit; riches are not the same as wealth, and nor is *rich* the same as *fulfilled*. Would you prefer to live in a society that exalts those with the most electronic digits in their computer-tracked bank account, or one that values, above all, loving families living in deep relationship with their neighbors in a clean and sustaining environment; phantom wealth or real wealth, in other words? What do we do when government breaks its promises? If we aren't safe in our homes anymore? If we don't have a *golden* retirement, despite having paid into Social Security for decades? If we can't buy meat in the store because the gas to deliver it there costs too much? What

if government price controls, meant to keep goods affordable, force the national retailers like WalMart or Safeway to shut their doors rather than take unacceptable losses? **What if our collapse intensifies?**

We avoid **truthful** analysis when it points to our complicity, or when it points to change more painful than remaining stationary. The pain of truth immobilizes us but at some point disease and rot expose the truth no matter the depth of our denial. Our journey into truth can release us from oppression and needless suffering; typically this happens one consciousness at a time. The first pay a heavy price to plant their seeds and blaze the trail: it seems unimaginable, untrue, or unworkable; but the crumbling worldview always shatters, revealing a new truth. How can we find the courage and the wisdom to be among the first to see the truth?

Race And Class

“I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices.”

Audre Lorde

Justice is about transformation, about changing the relations that link us together. Justice can manifest in various forms:

- **Retributive** Or as it is commonly referred to, revenge. Justice-as-revenge is sometimes called *closure for the victims*, and is one of the two pillars that support maintaining a death penalty for certain crimes. Many families will tell you that there can never be *closure* following the death of a loved one; that killing another is no justice. **Deterrence** The other pillar of our death penalty, justice-as-deterrence, attempts to make the penalty for an action so onerous that no one will do it. It is difficult to defend saying, “Killing is immoral; don’t kill or the state will kill you.” Studies consistently show that deterrence rarely works.
- **Rehabilitation** Justice-as-rehabilitation implies that an inappropriate action stems from a lack of something; it may be a lack of education, a lack of resources, or a lack of willpower for example. But in some way, if we can change these circumstances, then we will have a *just* solution because the action will not continue to occur.

- **Reparation** Justice-as-reparation means that the action is negated by the perpetrator making amends and returning their victim to the same state they were in before the action. The idea of restorative justice; a relatively new push to find justice that is effective in bringing healing to situations of injustice, is deeply set in this aspect of justice. It asks, how can both parties be made whole, not just the victim? It recognizes that the perpetrator is also a victim: a victim of the system or of the culture or of circumstance.

Today's American system of justice is deeply flawed: it is heavily manipulated by those with access to resources, it is used to suppress and oppress large swathes of our population, it focuses on retribution and deterrence rather than rehabilitation and restoration, and most importantly, justice is not available to women or people of color except to make them a victim of control.

These aspects are complicated by needing to understand deeply and fully the historical context as well as the ramifications that arise from any event or action. Too often we speak of justice as something that is clear, apparent, and easily understood. We close the book on some event and say, "We are done with that, we have resolved and punished and moved on from that and don't need to think about it anymore." Also too frequently, this is far from true: we have only pointed a finger of blame at someone else, when a portion of the blame lies with us. We have denied our involvement, abdicated any responsibility, excused it as necessary, or embraced lies that frame innocents rather than punishing those truly responsible. Now think about this for just a moment: this idea that innocents often pay the price that is due from the perpetrator. Is it not the same error in our thinking that leads us to go to war after a terrorist bombing takes place? Why go to war after 9/11,

rather than treat it as a crime and involve police, local and international, and bring the bombers to court? When the white supremacists in the South were bombing homes newly-purchased by blacks in Alabama; when bombs killed four young girls in Birmingham in 1963; when the white policemen were implicated in lynchings of innocent black men; would it have been appropriate for the black survivors to set bombs in the white neighborhoods? Would that have brought about justice? We must question the notion that justice is about an eye for an eye; what prison sentence is adequate recompense for taking a life? What justice is done when a teen is sentenced to 20 years behind bars for possession of a drug, any drug? How is that *just*? What is the likely outcome, for the youth and for his family, and what is gained for our society in general? How has our sense of *justice* become so warped?

“Well, that is all fine. But we are past racism today; and we have elected a black President!” many people say. Still, however, when growing up black in America it is the black person that has to **watch every situation** for the first sign that words or actions have been taken in a way **that is about to lead to violence**. They are the people who get slighted: for no apparent reason, because you are having a bad day, because they are *invisible*, because of something that happened 47 years ago to your grandmother; the list of reasons why we discriminate, treat others differently than we ourselves would expect to be treated, is at least as long as this book. All too often we take others for granted, especially in these days of widening wealth inequality and pressure on all of us just to survive. We fall back on attitudes our parents taught us in less-than-enlightened times, or we parrot what we heard others say when we were too young to understand the hurt our words carry as we spit them out. Do not discount or ignore those

around you whom you find hard to see: those who clean your table when you are finished eating, who answer your phones at work and book your appointments, who teach your children or who care for your aged parent, or even those who huddle together with their meager belongings outside in the cold near your warm, cozy home. They will do what they have to do to stay alive, when the time comes. Just because you have found it convenient to take them for granted does not mean they will spare you.

And while racism is still a deeply hurtful, even deadly, problem, class is also contributing to our collapse. The gap between rich and poor has never been wider. “There have always been rich and poor,” say the rich and comfortable, “and there always will be.” This, to them, is a self-evident truth; it has all the force of an immutable law of nature. But they are wrong. The division into rich and poor did not exist until very recently in man’s history – only a few yards back on our three-thousand-mile evolutionary walk; nor does it exist among other animals either. No animal *hoards* resources in order to live more comfortably at the expense of others in its neighborhood. It is not, therefore, a law of nature; it is a *law* that man has made himself. We trot out the truisms as we need them to justify what we enjoy that others cannot, at least under the rules as we have allowed them to be maintained. “*The issue isn’t jobs, even slaves have jobs. The issue is wages.*” writes Jim Hightower. These days our jobs participation rate, meaning the number of working-age adults who actually have work, is at its lowest since it began to be tracked: 59%. Of all the jobs created since the economics problems of 2007-2008, more than 75% are part-time jobs that pay less than \$13 per hour. So maybe even the *wage slaves* are finding it difficult to keep a job. The gap between the richest 10% and the poorest 50% is

wider than at any time in history. The only wage-earning group to increase its share of the rise in income in the 21st century is the top 5%. The rest of us, the 95%, make less now on average than we did in 2000. In 2012, the 400 people at the top of the heap took home more than the 150,000,000 people at the bottom of the pile, *combined*. We should be glad that we have 400 people **that are so talented and that are willing to work so hard!** These facts are true in the wealthiest nation the world has ever seen.

We are not narrowing the income gap, nor are we narrowing the wealth gap that results from receipt of income in excess of your current needs. This is especially acute since the Great Recession has stripped assets like homes from millions of owners and crushed the value of the stocks in the retirement accounts of millions more. We haven't closed the gap because it is impossible; certainly we have more resources than any other society in history. If we wanted to build equity for all, we definitely could. So the operative question is this: why haven't we built a society that has equal access for everyone? The fact is that there is still an incredibly deep and inherent bias in our society. Shown pictures of a neighborhood and asked to rate it in terms of attractiveness, photos taken at the same spot that include white pedestrians rate higher than photos including some people of color, and higher still than photos showing only people of color. Do these issues of race exist because people of color are actively working to maintain them? Obviously, no; instead these issues continue precisely because white people are not taking measures to change their perceptions and realities. White supremacy is a white problem, and it falls to white people alone to remedy it. So if you are white, ask yourself, "How does it feel to be **the problem?**"

The solution comes down to changing how we address issues of power and resources: it is about how we apportion *stuff*. Because those who have stuff don't accept when others try to take it, whether through robbery or new laws or taxes or by fiat, this equitable distribution won't just happen because we legislate a solution. We all tend to think that once we have something, some property or some comfort, that we are entitled to it and that it can't be taken from us without our consent. Often our first defense of the system is that *I don't benefit from racism, and I don't cause it*. Especially women can claim to not be the cause of racism since they can point to the reality that they are also treated as second-class citizens in terms of property and wages and oppression and violence. This clearly shows that gender and class are also sources of discrimination, and we must recognize that these issues, based in capitalism and patriarchy, also need to be solved if we are to have a society that is egalitarian. And queried individually you would affirm that your own core values prohibit discrimination: you believe, I am sure, in racial equality, and class justice, and compassion for others, and in most cases, in nonviolence as a solution to squabbles over property. It is, we argue, **the system** that does this, and that we are powerless to change the system. We internally absolve ourselves by rationalizing: **it's just the way things are**. We assure ourselves that if we were able to change it, we would not have a system steeped in white supremacy, continuing to perpetuate racism in the 21st century. We claim that there are differences between men and women, *that's just the reality*, and therefore it is not up to me to change Nature. **We are wrong.**

It is important to examine this issue of wealth inequality. The increasing gap between the income and assets of the rich and the poor shows the current

trajectory and eventual outcome of the American financial system. Zero interest rates on borrowed money for those who have assets already is a big culprit in creating this gap. For this trajectory to go anywhere other than capitalists' blood in the streets, it has to reverse course and end the flow of wealth and income away from the majority and to the few at the top. The current flow from poor to rich can only go on as long as those at the bottom have anything left to give; at some point, they won't. Then what? What is your solution when that time comes? Calling the solution *socialist* or *communist* and then dismissing the need for change, doesn't alter the fact that the current trends are unsustainable; and that means ***can't go on forever***. Being against any plan to address the inequality by claiming that it is *just a redistribution of wealth* ignores the fact that today we are seeing a redistribution of wealth already; albeit, from the poor to the rich. Will we wait for collapse, or will we change this economic system before that time comes?

Interest rates are supposed to, in a clean and well-functioning economy, set the price of money for investment purposes and thus encourage investing when rates are low, and discourage it when rates are high. This assumes, of course, that the pool of investors has enough confidence in the future to want to invest for the long-term. Today the outlook of our long-term future is grim at best; thus the price of money, or interest rates, would naturally be very high and there would be little or no investment going on. No investment means no growth; and this debt-based money system requires growth to survive. Artificially low rates, feeding money at fire-sale prices into a market that is already pessimistic, means that the only way the cheap money gets used is not for investment but for gambling. High stock values based primarily in algorithmic and high-frequency trading;

low mortgage rates unable to spur home building or buying in torpid markets; high fuel prices at the same time when we have alleged *abundant fuel stocks*, albeit stocks sold at prices that exceed \$100/barrel due to record-high extraction costs; banks that front-run trades to skim a profit off of every stock sale; banks that are fraudulently manipulating the benchmark interest rates for kickbacks and prices for precious metals in order to maintain the value of the U.S. dollar; none of these are signs of a free, well-running, clean marketplace. And who pays the price for low interest rates? Those few Americans who save and those on fixed incomes who need bond interest for their cash flow. David Stockman estimates that \$500 billion a year is being left in the coffers of the large banks as a result of the interest they are not having to pay on savings, even as they themselves have no cost to borrow compliments of the Federal Reserve's Zero Interest Rate Policy (ZIRP). And have the banks been making loans with their excess reserves? No, they park that money with the Fed and get better rates than they pay savers, again hurting those who played by the rules and now find themselves caught out by this freak monetary policy. In 2007 the market capitalization of the ten largest banks was \$1.25 trillion, 30 times higher than it was in 1987 when Alan Greenspan took over at the Fed. But during the *panic* of 2008; and be sure to question what you were told about the need to *save the banks* or else there would be a great seizing up of the economy, that market cap fell by nearly a trillion, or 75%. For a fraction of the amount we taxpayers ended up spending on the bank bailouts, we could have bought all their stock and nationalized them, allowing the interest from loan repayments to go into the federal budget and lessen the deficit or lower taxes. The amount of instability highlighted here is not due to simple economics of free

markets and supply-and-demand; it results from price and interest rate manipulation designed to allow privatized profits and socialized losses.

Next look at what the ZIRP does to government spending: when interest rates are nothing, there is no cost to borrow in order to fund government programs. Politicians can build roads to nowhere just to win votes. We have yet to fully grasp the impact that rising borrowing costs will have on the public spending; even at the historic American **average** of government bonds (4%) interest on our debt would force increased taxes, lowered spending, or money-printing-induced inflation, and perhaps all three⁴⁹. And if politicians can't agree on \$50 billion in cuts or taxes, how can they deal with an increase in interest costs of almost \$200 billion for every one percentage point rise in the rates? The sound bites are meant to keep you in the dark: "We've cut spending by one trillion dollars (whispering voice: over ten years). That works out to just \$100 billion a year, when annual borrowing to cover the gap between revenues and spending is over 15 times that amount. The math does not pencil out!

They (the banks) have captured the economy and the government. How do we, as a democracy and a people, reclaim our power? How do we bring our markets back into the freedom we need, expect, and deserve? How do we trade goods and services to meet not only our needs, but those of everyone else anywhere in the production chain, and in the ecosystems that provide us with unimaginable wealth from our commons? Don't fall for the short-term mindset that insists there is no alternative and that this system has always been like this. Our human bias towards thinking tomorrow will

⁴⁹ November 2013: federal debt above \$17 trillion, the interest due at 4% would be \$680 billion per year

be, must be, just like today only bigger is an error of historic proportions; how can we break free of this dominating world view? When will we stop living a lie?

Wealth inequality is sometimes a matter of life and death now, today; rather than in some future tragedy or spread out over a lifetime. Here's a description of the night Hurricane Sandy devastated New York City 29 October, 2012:

"Hours before the storm [Sandy] arrived on Monday night, restaurants, corner grocery stores and hotels were open in the Union Square area of Manhattan. (My wife and I moved to a hotel there after being ordered to evacuate our apartment in lower Manhattan.) Instead of heading home to their families as the winds picked up, the city's army of cashiers, waiters and other service workers remained in place.

"Divides between the rich and the poor are nothing new in New York, but the storm brought them vividly to the surface. *There were residents like me who could invest all of their time and energy into protecting their families. And there were New Yorkers who could not.*

"Those with a car could flee. Those with wealth could move into a hotel. Those with steady jobs could decline to come into work. **But the city's cooks, doormen, maintenance men, taxi drivers and maids left their loved ones at home.**" [emphasis added]

What is clear is that the world has been living above its means for a very long time. Studies show that we have been exceeding the Earth's capacity to regenerate what we take from the planet in renewable resources since the 1980s; today we exceed that capacity by nearly 40%. In other words, we are eating our seed corn, using up the

capital that Nature so generously provided. That we have managed to live a more comfortable lifestyle decade by decade has been the result of printed fiat money and a massive increase in credit. **This is why much of the growth we have seen is not real growth, and therefore the wealth we have accumulated is not real wealth.** This is why the current system cannot last. But since America, with 5% of the world's population, uses 25% of its resources and generates 30% of its waste, **we are the people who must cut back** if we are to begin to live within our means. It is less a matter of too many people on the planet, and more a matter of too many resource-profligate people taking more than their share; namely, too many Americans. How do we end this over-consumption and maintain the health and safety of **all** our people?

Who deserves *how much*: how much money, how much hunger, how much health and how much pain? How do we decide? If you are poor, you are lazy; if you are rich, you are hard-working; or so this culture tells us. Put another way, we are indoctrinated that poor = immoral while rich = righteous. *Everyone deserves what they have* (or so we are told by our parents in many cases, and by most media). Greed, the idea that there is never enough and so I must claim and hoard everything I can, leads to breath-taking corruption. There is nothing we won't do to a neighbor in order to make a few more dollars. Robin Meyers writes,

“Greed steals fathers from their children. Greed makes women betray their highest virtues. Greed fuels a culture of entitlement thinking, where I can break the law, pollute the environment, cut corners, and use my wealth as a weapon against those who are desperate – so long as it enriches me.”

And this is truly a culture that values conspicuous consumption. If you have the means, you need to prove it. **In the last 25 years**, while the average worker's inflation-adjusted pay has dropped, the wealth of African-American households has plummeted. Never something to talk about in polite society, **the gap between the wealth of whites and what passes for the wealth of blacks has tripled**. For many this was due to the predatory lending practices that forced even people with good credit to take sub-prime loans with huge jumps in interest rates after 3 or 5 years. For some, it is the ever-climbing rents, rising food prices, and the increasing cost of transportation that prevent any savings that might lead to increasing one's wealth⁵⁰. And for most, the idea of playing in the stock market as a way to gain wealth is beyond their reach because they haven't the needed ante to get started. Since blacks were prohibited from owning land until relatively recently, they have not benefitted as white families have from inheritances passing down assets from generation to generation. And despite all the Republican rhetoric about hard work and all that jazz, the big determining factor in wealth in America is skin color. Studies consistently show that when presented with identical resumes, one with a white-sounding name and one with a black-sounding name, hiring managers will inevitably call in the white one first, and often, *only*.

If you think racial equality has come to the United States, you haven't been paying attention. Not to our poverty statistics. Not to the makeup of our prison population. Not to our educational achievements or lack

⁵⁰ The reported rate of inflation, termed the *core inflation rate*, conveniently **excludes the rising costs of food and energy**, thus making it easy to show that inflation is low.

thereof⁵¹. Nor to the Supreme Court as it continues to shred any hope of equality, with Antonin Scalia in the forefront of the charge back to the way things were in the early 1800's. The civil rights struggle is not over, it has slipped into reverse.

And racism affects much more than just jobs. Race and class remain the best indicators as to where you will find the bad stuff like waste incinerators and landfills, and where you will find the good stuff like parks and libraries. The issues pertaining to America around what has come to be called *environmental justice* are myriad. Note these statistics identified solely by race, in excerpts from Robert Bullard's 1994 book, "*Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice & Communities of Color*":

- 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 the location of abandoned toxic waste sites. The study also found that:
 1. 60% (15 million) African Americans live in communities with one or more abandoned toxic waste sites;

⁵¹ An investigative report in the San Francisco Chronicle (2013) titled "Even Odds", points out, "African American boys in Oakland California are more likely to miss school, be suspended, not graduate on time or be incarcerated than any other students. Over the past decade, *the number of African American men killed on the streets of Oakland nearly matched the number who graduated from its high schools ready to attend a state university.*" This is a deeply broken educational system, not to mention the dysfunctional culture of violence that spawns such a massacre.

2. three of the five largest active commercial hazardous waste landfills are located in predominantly African American or Latino American communities and account for 40% of the nation's total estimated landfill capacity; and
 3. African Americans are heavily over-represented in the populations of cities with the largest number of abandoned toxic waste sites.
- Millions of Americans live in housing and physical environments that are overburdened with environmental problems including:
 1. older housing with lead-based paint
 2. congested freeways that crisscross neighborhoods
 3. industries that emit dangerous pollutants into the area
 4. abandoned toxic waste sites
 - Virtually all of the studies of exposure to outdoor air pollution have found significant differences in exposure by income and race. African Americans and Latino Americans are more likely than whites to live in areas with reduced air quality.
 - A 1992 study by staff writers from the National Law Journal uncovered glaring inequities in the way the federal EPA enforces its laws. The authors wrote:

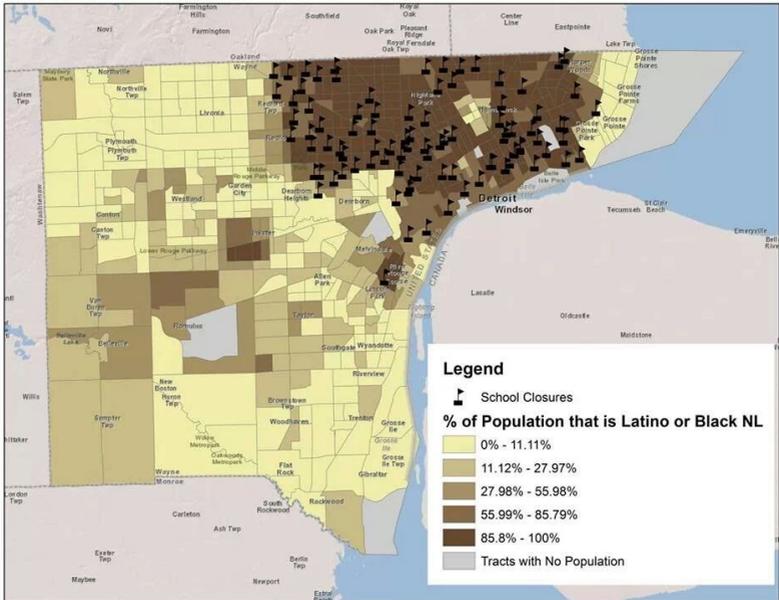
“There is a racial divide in the way the U.S. government cleans up toxic waste sites and punishes polluters. **White communities see faster action, better results, and stiffer penalties**”

on polluters than communities where blacks, Hispanics and other minorities live. This unequal protection often occurs whether the community is wealthy or poor.” [emphasis added]

- After examining census data, civil court dockets, and the EPA's own record of performance at 1,177 Superfund toxic waste sites, the National Law Journal report revealed the following:
 1. Penalties under hazardous waste laws at sites having the greatest white population were **500% higher** than penalties with the greatest minority population, averaging \$335,566 for white areas, compared to \$55,318 for minority areas.
 2. The disparity under the toxic waste law occurs **by race alone**, not income. The average penalty in areas with lowest income is \$113,491; 3% more than the average penalty in areas with the highest median incomes.
 3. For all the federal environmental laws aimed at protecting citizens from air, water, and wasted pollution, penalties in white communities were 46% higher than in minority communities.
 4. Under the giant Superfund cleanup program, abandoned hazardous waste sites in minority areas take 20% longer to be placed on the national priority list than those in white areas.
- Vital Statistics from the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation:

1. African American children are five times more likely to suffer from lead poisoning than white children, and 22% of African American children living in older housing are lead poisoned.
2. An estimated 50% of African Americans and 60% of Hispanics live in a county in which levels of two or more air pollutants exceed governmental standards.
3. Communities with the greatest number of commercial hazardous-waste facilities have some of the highest proportions of minority residents.
4. Half of all Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indians live in communities with uncontrolled toxic waste sites.
5. Communities with existing incinerators have 89% more minorities than the national average.
6. African Americans are heavily overrepresented in cities with the largest number of abandoned toxic waste sites, such as Memphis, St. Louis, Houston, Cleveland, Chicago, and Atlanta.

Look at where the schools are that Detroit is closing in 2013, compared to the racial composition of the neighborhoods, and tell me there is equal opportunity for each child of color in that city:



There are many reasons that ending racism and classism and gender discrimination are important tasks as we create a new society. Not the least of them is to re-establish justice and fairness among the only *race* that matters to us: **the human race**. But in particular I want to be very specific about another reason that we rarely think about: **diversity is critical** to our survival. As single, solitary human being, I will not live long enough to reproduce. I need caregivers, who raise me for many years, for no reward other than the love and gratitude I can give them in return. Even once it appears I can take care of myself, I have to sleep, I am unable to run a deer to death consistently alone, I cannot make and gather everything I need to live; in other words, I need a tribe or a family in order to survive. Not everyone has the muscles, the eyesight, or the reflexes to be a great hunter, or a great gatherer, or a great computer

engineer. Diversity, a variety of skills and perspectives, allows a group a much better chance of survival than a single individual. **When I am alone, I am impoverished of experience and abilities and creativity.** Our human race has managed to inhabit every environment we have encountered save three: under miles of water in the deep ocean, near or in the core of the Earth, and in environments that expose us to heavy doses of radiation. We have been able to do this not as individuals but as communities of human beings, who share and are rewarded for that sharing by increasing their ability to overcome obstacles and attacks from objects and beings much larger (and sometimes much smaller) than ourselves. Diversity is what works; denying women, or people of a different language or skin color or belief system a **complete stake and role** in our society can never allow us to realize our full potential. If I discriminate or deny someone fair and just access to resources, if I deny others the right to contribute their gifts and talents because of some arbitrary and superficial distinction, then I am denying myself my own full potential. How does that help me, or you, or our planet?

How do we challenge these many issues? Here are some questions:

- Is male-dominance the only way to build a society?
- Is capitalism, with its emphasis on profit and property, the only way to distribute resources?
- How much longer will we allow the violence that enables white supremacy to continue?
- How can we replace our current system that funds education from property taxes, virtually ensuring that children in resource-poor neighborhoods get an inferior education, with

one that offers equal opportunity regardless of the circumstances of the parents?

- We abdicate our responsibility by thinking that government is there to protect us. What is the role of government? Is it more than just an authority that possesses guns and flags and uses both to exploit and dominate the majority of its citizens? Do we need government? Why? Who decides how much control government gets over our lives?
- To end extreme poverty we need only end extreme wealth. How might we do that?
- Is the only way to have a global system dependent upon the U.S. as the sole superpower?

*See, if these are all **only** choices, then we can make **different** choices.*

If we remain peaceful, only reformist actions remain; those small, *change your light bulbs* things we do to try to make a difference. Yet it is clear, that as one in more than seven billion, in a world that is so interwoven and complex that one issue cannot be solved without addressing a myriad other issues at the same time, there is nothing that you or I can do that will even make the tiniest difference. These issues of race, class, and gender discrimination are at the very heart of our society; we will be unable to solve any of our issues with any degree of success without addressing these first and foremost. If someone presented you with a plan: “here’s how we can structure society to solve social justice issues, to be environmentally sustainable, and to offer spiritual fulfillment to every sentient being, but it requires a violent revolution to put it into action”, would you agree to participate? But as we feel in our hearts, there is no

plan that could make that much sense, and so we are left with our own small actions. It is a joy to maintain our own integrity, by doing the right thing. It is also deeply challenging to exist with any integrity in this current paradigm where money is required for survival. It feels like the best we can do is to analyze, speak, act, and then repeat. In this way we build the path one step at a time, not knowing how the system will look when it is finally in place, but trusting that our actions will make it clear as we progress. Systemic change means we can't isolate within silos: we need massive changes like full employment or a guaranteed, living income for everyone; housing for all; electrical power that is locally generated and not reliant upon an ageing, vulnerable national grid; free education, including to a college degree; free healthcare for all, forgiveness of all student debt now outstanding; and we need to demilitarize our police, re-humanizing their interactions with us, as well as to dismantle our military and re-humanize our international relations (which would make homeland security something we don't have to kill to try to provide). No one person, or one committee, can accomplish all of this. But without tackling **all of the underlying reasons** we have not already accomplished these human goals, no success is possible by any individual or piecemeal changes.

We are prisoners, trapped within this dominant, racist culture. We don't know that there is an outside, a place beyond the walls, where life is different: loving, cooperative, filled with enough for all, not too much for any one person. We even fail to see that as long as we remain within the paradigm, we are less than whole ourselves; part of our humanity rests within our connection with others and this prison is determined to keep us separate, divided, and conquered. It is Space Age toys: oil, plastics, computers; that intensify this

mess. Has our technology managed to slow the rate of climate change? To lower the numbers of species going extinct? To clean our air and water? The answer to all of these questions is *no*. What will be different tomorrow, what new idea or technology is ready to debut that will move this pendulum back towards a set of ecosystems that are healthy? What have you done, in the last week, to be part of the solution? Before you answer that remember that everything you did last year *failed to save anything*. What will it take? We have a good idea what is causing it: an economy based on oil and debt and a society steeped in a fear so profound that we are willing to suspend even our basic human rights in an attempt to feel safe. Tell me what new technology will reverse this in the next six months, because any longer and the ice cap is gone and we have no more to say about the matter.

And here is the big problem with carrying on as if it will all work out in the end: while we wait, every 28 hours another black man is gunned down by police, security guards, or neighborhood watch vigilantes, all bent on maintaining the racist status quo. We wring our hands about gun control following every mass shooting, and offer the mush of gun control as something that "...maybe we can get past Congress **this** time...". We don't question the logic of this, as there are more guns than people in this country, and **no effort can get them all under control**. We don't ask why so many people see killing as a respectable solution, and we don't teach conflict resolution to school children. We closed the mental health facilities three decades ago, kicking a million people out to fend on their own, and then we wonder how we can get rid of the million homeless people, some of whom need mental health care. And those that are under care, are taking drugs that have often been proven not effective, or that come with, wait

for it, serious side effects including a tendency to create **suicidal emotions in users**, while failing to remedy aggression. And through it all, we don't ask about taking guns away from the police, or about solving the root problems of race and class. How do we think this is going to get any better? What we are doing now isn't working...

It is no longer a question of creating a way to allow the ideas of industrial, exploitation, entitlement, and privilege to continue; it is now a question of how do we hospice the dying of these ideas. And hospicing the death of patriarchy and war and capitalism is not a series of small tasks like buying curly light bulbs, taking trash to the curb in a "recycling" box, or driving an electric vehicle. It is instead a huge task, one that includes noticing when the dominant culture's propaganda is manifesting from my own lips as "gospel", as well as actively seeking ways to monkey wrench the dysfunctional systems so that we reach collapse while there is some amount of life and future left for those who follow us to build with. Ask more of yourself, rather than waiting to be asked. Don't fall for the propaganda that says if you are a model prisoner, you will eventually escape from the prison.

Mass incarceration is a counter-revolution, mounted by the rich and white power structure, which has negated the gains of civil rights. Arising as a result of the *War on Drugs*, it is a systemic tool of social and economic control. As it has manifested today, it is focused primarily upon people of color, especially African-American and Hispanic men. Put simply: what do you do when you have no use for a particular class or race in your society? You lock them up... Michelle Alexander points out that it is better to be exploited than

to be marginalized; at least if you are exploited, you are needed. Mass incarceration proves her point.

But before we look into the details of how this has managed to bring us to where we are today, let's look at how laws against using, selling, or possessing drugs have been used historically to oppress particular racial groups. We in America have a long history filled with separation and hate:

- 1880: opium had been brought over from China by the Chinese laborers who had been exploited in building the transcontinental railroad, and we began to incarcerate them for its use once they were no longer *needed* to work on the railroad
- Early 1900s: criminalizing cocaine was used in the black community to incarcerate the children of former slaves who were trying to make something of themselves; remember, cocaine wasn't illegal until it was found to be a useful tool for this purpose. Cocaine was part of the original recipe, and the genesis of the name, of *Coca-Cola*
- 1930: Hemp began to come into the US from Mexico along with migrant workers who did the back-breaking labor in the agricultural fields that fed our nation. One way to keep these workers in *their place* was to criminalize the drug, and thus be able to threaten the workers and break up their families when they were caught with this harmless substance
- Also beginning around 1930, the Great Migration separated families. Black workers left their southern family behind and moved to the northern states where they found employment in the households of the middle and upper classes. Beginning the process we call *remittance*

today, when the worker goes to where the work is and sends money home to support those left behind, we see the system begin to exploit the workers by paying less than a living wage; in other words, a wage that is insufficient to support an entire family, as well as a system designed to exploit workers by enforcing a separation from those they love, even if not yet by incarceration

- 1960s: Redlining separates both classes and races by denying, or charging more for, services such as banking, insurance, access to health care, mortgage loans, and even supermarkets; or denying jobs to residents in particular areas, based on a person's race or class
- 1980s: the *supposed* beginning of a crack cocaine *epidemic* in black communities ramps up fear in white communities and leads to mandatory sentencing that far exceeds ~~sanity~~ the usual punishment for drug crimes. At the time, drug use was considered to be a *problem* by **less than three percent of Americans**. And actual drug use was affecting hardly more than three percent of people, too. There are persistent charges that there was government, in particular CIA, involvement in the importation of this particular drug into the country precisely so that draconian sentencing laws could be passed⁵².
- 2000s: the increasing use of meth has led to the oppression of poor white communities in many of the same ways that are detailed above⁵³

⁵² Search the names *Michael Ruppert* or *Gary Webb*, or just the terms *CIA cocaine* to learn more

⁵³ What race or class will be next? A better question: who is left to oppress?

- *And just to be clear:* In 2012, **prescription drugs** kill more people in America than **heroin and cocaine combined**, while **tobacco kills one of every three users**, and **alcohol** continues to kill more people by heart and liver disease, obesity, depression, cancers, and accidents than any other single chemical. Which drug should we really be targeting if we want to save people from drugs?

Let us note some of the intertwined connections of racism and immigration. In 1790 the Naturalization Act allowed certain European immigrants: *free white persons* only, a path to citizenship, the right to vote and to hold office, or to own property. In 1830 the Indian Removal Act forcibly relocated Native Americans to land west of the Mississippi River and granted the stolen land in the east to white people. Blacks had no access, of course; they were not citizens. And, again, the Homestead Act of 1862 (during the administration of President Lincoln) authorized the granting of free land to homesteaders; of course, whites only, to be carved out of what had been the Indian Territory of the West. By this one act, more than 270 million acres, 10 percent of the total land area of the U.S., was passed exclusively to white people in a massive affirmative action gesture.

Alien Land laws in several states prevented Asian immigrants from owning land; again, affirmative action for whites. Racial barriers to citizenship for Asians were in place until 1952, and racial preferences in immigration until 1965. Whites win again.

When the progressive Social Security Act was passed in 1935 guaranteeing an income for workers after their retirement, it specifically excluded domestic and agricultural workers; white advantage once more encoded into law, exempting people of color from

coverage under the program without saying a single word about race. The Wagner Act in the same year, also part of the New Deal, protected and extended the rights and benefits of workers, but it also explicitly acknowledged the right of unions to exclude Blacks. The Federal Housing Administration, which allowed millions to own their own homes for the first time and in so doing to amass a mountain of wealth that could be passed through inheritance to successive generations, also created a system of explicitly tying loan eligibility to race. Between 1934 and 1962 the government issued \$10 billion in home loans, 98 percent to whites. Once more, we see policies that are actually affirmative action for whites.

Today, as a result both of affirmative action for white people; euphemistically called the *creation of the middle class*, and also the gutting of wealth that has occurred following the sub-prime mortgage collapse, the typical white family has a net worth that is on average **nineteen times** the net worth of the typical black family. When Black and white wage earners with identical incomes are compared, whites still have more than twice the wealth of Blacks.

Michelle Alexander's amazing book, "*The New Jim Crow*" explains the oppression of mass incarceration extremely well. She points to a multitude of factors when explaining how drug laws have decimated communities in a racist or classist manner:

- What we call today the *War on Drugs* conveniently appeared in the 1980s when globalization began and joblessness ravaged inner city communities. People who are **jobless** are often **hopeless** as well: when you are locked in segregated communities, poorly educated,

dependent upon mindless assembly line work, and that work disappears, what are you to do?

- Most people equate drug use with violence; there is no correlation between the two. In fact, **using marijuana** (which accounts for more than half of the drug crimes that have been prosecuted over the last thirty years), is an **antidote for violence**
- Most people ~~misunderstand~~ overestimate the *drug* problem. More people die from alcohol than from all other drugs **combined**, by at least an order of magnitude. [My comment: And for those people for whom drugs do create a problem in their life, it should be treated as a medical or psychological issue, not a criminal one.]
- Most people believe the lie that only black or brown people sell drugs. In fact, more white people show up in hospital emergency rooms with a drug overdose than any other race. Studies continually show that drug use is equal, within a margin of error, across all races
- 50% of working age black men have been in the criminal justice system and are subject to the restrictions that follow
- **More blacks were under correctional control in 2011 than were enslaved in 1850**
- Since as early as 2004, **more black men have no right to vote than in 1870** when the first voting rights act was passed. Poll taxes and literacy tests failed to limit black election participation; felon disenfranchisement,

meaning that felons are barred from voting, has not

- **80%** of black children will live apart from their fathers at some point in their youth due to his being in jail.
- To a large extent, the most heinous laws: those banning housing and food assistance and educational assistance for those convicted of drug crimes, were put into place under Clinton as Democrats tried to be **tougher on crime** than Republicans in order to regain votes that had been lost when the **War on Drugs** began in the 1980s

We often believe that sending someone to prison is a way to reform them: to teach them their actions were inappropriate or harmful and to never do those things again. Some people still believe the myth that prison **rehabilitates** prisoners. But the current epidemic of incarceration presents us with a difficult question: “*How do you re-enter a society that had no use for you in the first place?*” There aren’t enough jobs, never have been, in the poorer neighborhoods of our land. Might I ask that if you have a say in hiring at the place where you work, try to hire those just out of prison who are trying to merge back into society. Give them a short probation period to be sure they will work out. Coordinate with local or church groups that are already working with prisoners and their families and you might find you get good leads on workers who will be an asset to your firm. We truly have to ask ourselves, “**What am I willing to do** to address this issue?”

Under cover of law, when prisoners are released, we then:

- discriminate against them in housing, meaning fathers can't stay in the same house as their children. Fathers can't even **visit** their child, if that child is in public housing. And imagine not having a place to live while you look for work?
- prevent them from accessing *all* social safety net programs
- stop them from voting
- prevent them from receiving any government assistance for education, in order to be trained in skills that can help them find a job
- make it even *harder* for them to find employment by forcing them to *check the box* disclosing their conviction, a sure way to not get called for an interview. And when you can't get your license back in order to be a barber if you are a felon, how does that encourage a formerly-productive man to find work?
- prevent them from serving on a jury, making all-white juries more common
- charge prisoners for their *maintenance* stemming from their imprisonment; a bill they have to pay back once they have been released. This may be *in addition to* catching up on unpaid child support. We hardly leave a person with any hope of making a good life for themselves when we bury them in debt, and often merely for using or possessing drugs⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Again, drug use could be seen as a medical or psychological issue, not a criminal one. We could actually **rehabilitate** people with drug issues, rather than treat drug use as *criminal*.

- In some states, if you get a job 100% of your wages can be garnished to pay back these debts. **This seems to be a system *designed* to send men right back to prison**

Even worse, upon release from prison many people feel a great shame from having served time, and they suffer that shame again and again when someone who did not know about it discovers their past. This shame extends to families, and especially the children of prisoners, as well; thus it affects the entire community. We force people to go underground to avoid doing time on the outside too. The shame keeps even communities hard-hit by mass incarceration silent and in denial, avoiding discussing the true impacts of serving time. Lies proliferate, if only to avoid that look a person gets from others when they acknowledge their past. Shaming and blaming makes collective political action to end this scourge next to impossible.

The use of *stop-and-frisk* has become the tool-de-jour of police, largely without challenge. In 2013 New York City (NYC) lost a court challenge about its use of the tactic on the grounds that it is racist⁵⁵. Their program resulted in stopping 614,000 people in 2010, (87% black and Latino) and garnering 69,000 arrests for possession of marijuana, contraband that would never have been found if the person who was frisked without reasonable cause had been in a white community, or on a college campus, or in an upscale urban neighborhood. No sweeps were being made in white neighborhoods, or on college campuses; no, of course not... NYC defends its practice by claiming that only *suspicious* people are

⁵⁵ It is being appealed, and the stop-and-frisk policy **is being allowed to continue** pending the outcome of the appeal...

stopped and claiming that the policy is needed in order to keep New Yorkers safe, without addressing the issues around its violations of our Constitutional protections. The idea that a police officer is biased towards stopping only people of color is hard to prove, since we can't look inside anyone's mind and read their thoughts. This bias is often unconscious: a police officer, driving slowly along the street, sees a group of black youth, pants sagging, and thinks "I'll just check on what they're doing...", a thought he wouldn't have if the youth were white and appearing like they are *just having a good time*. Our culture, through the various types of media we enjoy, teaches us a mindset that we use to filter and interpret all of what we encounter in our daily lives. We have yet to see a majority of that media portray people of color as being equal, or having the same rights and privileges as whites, so most of us still harbor unconscious biases against other races. Merely electing as President a moneyed individual who happens to also be black does not end the racism that has been embedded in this society since its founding 400 years ago. In this case, class may be the more operative definition of Barack Obama, his motives and intentions, and not his race.

We must awaken from our color-blind slumber and see what is happening in our name. You may say, "*I am not racist, I don't see *color**". Don't let your refusal to see color blind you to what is happening to those not of your tribe. We have to embrace criminals, celebrate their release, and help to merge them back into society as productive members, not shun and stigmatize them. We need to ask ourselves, "*How do we stay blind to the ways we are controlled, or the ways we justify that control so we don't have to rebel against it?*" Think about the message sent to the rest of us, as we see how those at the bottom are dealt with. There is no path to

justice that includes this type of systemic control and oppression.

Angela Davis ties the rise of prisons, not just to racism, but also to the shift in capitalism in the 1980s that placed profits over people. We have seen education deteriorate, wages stagnate, prices rise, jobs flow overseas, and true unemployment rise⁵⁶; all as a result of the **sole focus on profits** by corporations. You hide the problem of unhappy, unemployed people by putting the problem in prison, and at the same time **you create another profitable enterprise**. Think of the millions of jobs that have been created: not just in prisons, but in courts with their judges, lawyers, and staff; in drug enforcement at our borders; in police on the streets; and in the companies that provide all law enforcement officers and security guards with their militarized tools of the trade or that subcontract to provide additional security resources to government agencies. Many police departments today are dependent upon the funds they get because of asset forfeiture laws; laws that in most cases don't require conviction before the owner loses the asset, only an arrest. Note too that federal funding to local law enforcement hinges on the **volume of drug arrests**, not on getting the kingpins who foster violence and infect our society with drugs. And consider the role America plays in funding⁵⁷ Israel's creation of the largest

⁵⁶ We have lots of **work**, especially as caregivers. What we lack are **jobs**. And although we are told that the *jobless* rate has been at 7+% for many months, this reflects only those people who collect unemployment benefits. The **true** unemployment numbers, including part-time-only workers who desire full-time work, is nearly 20%.

⁵⁷ America *gives* more foreign aid to Israel than any other nation; yet that aid is not money, rather it is payment made to U.S. military contractors who then provide arms, military supplies, and personnel to serve at Israel's direction on behalf

open-air prison in the world... how is that not capitalism and racism in the worst possible combination?

The same divisive politics that birthed Mass Incarceration are now being focused elsewhere: immigration detention centers and deportations, the *War on Terror*, and charging people with crimes solely because they provide humanitarian aid to certain nations or races, under the rubric of *material support of terrorists*. Can you see where this is leading? They are coming for us all, soon.

Racism is also still a huge problem even among activists who truly wish to create a society that does not suffer so. Here's commentary on this aspect of race relations from Pamela Bridgewater:

“We’ve all been there - in that room, around that table, on that direct action - when some aspect of our differences threatens our ability to work (indeed our very presence) in the movement. The issue of how our processes, strategies, and theories impact or are impacted by our differences sets the stage for fear, anger, guilt, confusion, and hurt. All too often the work stops. Despite our many commonalities and what’s at stake, activists run into the destructive potential of difference early and often. But **difference should be anticipated, even welcomed.** Moments of difference and potential conflict offer possibility to create deeper, more meaningful bonds. Whether we are bound by gender, sexual expression, disability, income inequality, language, homelessness or injustice, our work falls victim to our inability to deal effectively with the inevitable race moment. Here are a few suggestions on how we can begin to transform potentially

of our country and *interests*. This is how most foreign aid works.

destructive race moments into opportunities to move toward to our common political objectives:

- Recognize that the race moment is inevitable and it is important to do as much work as possible to prepare for the race moment *before* it arises. The success of the movement depends on all of us working on our individual gaps and blinders
- Develop a strategy for engaging the trauma of slavery, racism, and difference discrimination *before* the race moment arises
- When the race moment arises remember to **have compassion** for errors and missteps of those whom you trust in other contexts
- *The notion that one should be free from error, discomfort or confusion when their approach to difference is at issue is oftentimes a manifestation of **privilege***
- Recognize that all your work will probably not make the issue of race less uncomfortable
- Remember that **comfort is rarely, if ever, useful** in progressive social change movements
- The race issue cannot be understood, much less transformed or be transformative, without meaningful engagement with the history of slavery in America
- Commit to learning more about the relationship between slavery and the modern manifestations of race and difference than you know today. Make the same commitment tomorrow

- Develop a race moment reading list. A few highlights from my list are:
 - John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*
 - Audrey Lorde, *Sister Outsider*
 - James Baldwin, *Price of the Ticket*
 - Angela Y. Davis, *Race, Women and Class*
 - Edward Said, *Orientalism*
 - Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*
 - Elizabeth Spellman, *Inessential Woman*
 - Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, *Our Word is Our Weapon*
 - Derrick Jensen, *The Culture of Make Believe*.

I would add: Robert Jensen, *The Heart of Whiteness*

Earlier in this book I defined racism as, “giving advantage to one’s own race when your interests clash with those of a different race”. How nice and polite that sounds. Racism, when practiced, isn’t as sweet: it tastes a lot more like oppression, rape, violence, murder, injustice, and slavery, just to name what immediately comes to mind. If I ask you if you are racist, these are the kinds of behavior that you will assess and you will likely say, “No, of course not!” and feel very smug and proud of yourself. And of course, society lets you carry on with your business, without once asking that you turn the notion of racism on its head and ask about the elephant in the room: what allows racism to continue relatively unabated despite more than two hundred years of abolitionists’ work, and the majority of citizens feeling innocent of this crime, just like you? The answer is, wait for it: because we are all like Peggy McIntosh⁵⁸,

⁵⁸ Taken from an essay that is excerpted from Working Paper 189. *White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account*

who points to *white privilege* when she writes, "*I was taught to see racism only in **individual acts** of meanness, not in **invisible systems** conferring dominance on my group*". [emphasis added]

It can be nearly impossible to identify ways in which those of us who are lucky enough to be born white continue to benefit from the structural racism within our society. And to paraphrase Lierre Keith, I hate when I benefit from an existing system that is so problematic: I am inclined to allow it to continue because I am basically selfish and prefer to be comfortable, not challenged. Examples of white privilege include, but are in no way limited to:

- I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed, harassed, or denied service
- I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism **for their own daily physical protection**
- 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 race

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 College 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
- I can apply for loans or insurance without worrying that I will be given a worse deal than someone who is white
- If I work in a tipped position, at a restaurant for example, I will get more in tips than a non-white server for the same performance⁵⁹.
- I am much less likely, by at least an order of magnitude, to go to prison once I have been arrested for any crime. Corollary: I am much less likely, by at least an order of magnitude, to find myself arrested despite the fact that the rate of law-breaking is consistent across all races
- I don't have to be afraid every time I see a police car approach
- I am much more likely to be the beneficiary of wealth in the form of tangible assets, land, and homes that have been provided to me by an inheritance passed down through many generations
- I am much less likely to die as a soldier participating in combat on foreign soil; this may be because I am less likely to have military service be the only reasonable or respectable employment in my neighborhood, because I may

⁵⁹ Consider also the power imbalance between tippers, who are typically male, and servers, 70 percent of whom are female, and consider that the restaurant industry generates five times the average number of sexual harassment claims per worker.

be educated enough to not choose military service as a career, because I am likely to not need veterans benefits to fund a college degree, or because I am less likely to be drafted due to having a student deferral during times of a national draft

- I am not questioned when I enter my polling place to vote
- It is not true that antiracism work is the work or the responsibility of people of color, although this is usually what white people think

I spent some time recently volunteering twice a month at a food distribution center for a local food bank. It would be set up in a parking lot for a few hours, and about 8 or 10 of us would unload the delivery truck and then hand out bags of groceries and produce to over 250 families. All the volunteers were Hispanic, except for myself (white) and the small Asian lady who was in charge. Not a session would go by however, without someone in line for food coming up and asking me a question, thinking I was the person in charge. Sometimes, even a new volunteer would fall into the same cultural trap!

From a slightly different perspective, read what Jana-Rae Yerxa writes in her piece, "*The Unravelling of a Colonized Mind*". Please realize that, while she points to the effects of her mind being colonized by the white ruling class, she is also illuminating the opposite, the many ways by which white privilege manifests itself in society today:

"Sure everybody struggles. But to be born an Indigenous person, you are born into struggle. My struggle. Your struggle. Our struggle. The colonial struggle. There are many layers to this struggle. For the longest time, I didn't even know

what the true struggle was about yet I couldn't escape it. It consumed me. Colonialism, as I have been forced to discover, is like a cancer. But instead of the cells in your body betraying itself, ***the thoughts in your mind work against you and eat you up from the inside out.*** You're like the walking dead and you don't even know it because you are so blinded. You can't see the truth. Here are some of the perverted ways colonialism infects the mind:

- With a colonized mind, I hate being Indian.
- With a colonized mind, I accept that I am Indian because that's who the colonizer told me I am.
- With a colonized mind, I don't understand that I am Anishinaabe⁶⁰.
- With a colonized mind, I believe I am inferior to the white race.
- With a colonized mind, I wish I was white.
- With a colonized mind, I draw pictures of my family with peach-colored skin, blonde hair and blue eyes because I've internalized that this is the ideal, what looks good, and what is beautiful.
- With a colonized mind, I keep my emotions of inferiority to white people a secret from others and **even from myself.**
- With a colonized mind, I try diligently to mirror white people as closely as I possibly can.

⁶⁰ Anishinaabe is the autonym often used by the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Algonquin peoples. They all speak closely related Anishinaabemowin/Anishinaabe languages, of the Algonquian language family. The meaning of Anishnaabeg (the plural form of Anishinaabe) is 'First' or 'Original Peoples'.

- With a colonized mind, I desperately want to be accepted by white people.
- With a colonized mind, to gain the acceptance of white people, I will detach myself from all that does not mirror acceptable *white* standards, whether it is how one dresses, one speaks, or one looks.
- With a colonized mind, I feel as though I am swearing when I say *white people* in front of white people.
- With a colonized mind, I believe there is no racism.
- With a colonized mind, I believe that racism does not impact me.
- With a colonized mind, I deny my heritage and proudly say, “*We are all just people.*”
- With a colonized mind, when discussing issues pertaining to race, I try desperately not to offend white people.
- With a colonized mind, I do not know who I am.
- With a colonized mind, I believe I know who I am and do not understand that this isn’t so because I’ve become the distorted image of who the authorities tell me I am.”

It is very difficult for white people to see the world in which we live and the privileges that we don’t even have to think about, that just smooth over our road and make things easy for us. We don’t appreciate how well off we are, and how this privilege is also a fundamental aspect of racism. We whites think we are founding and leading a *Movement* that will bring about change, and usually we think that we are just beginning the struggle. Yet the real movement is not made up of white, middle-class, college students; the real movement is made up of

human beings who are not seen or heard, and **who are resisting with their bodies and lives in the belly of the beast, most often without a choice.** The real movement is made up of human beings who are still alive despite hundreds of years of attempt at extermination by the dominant culture. The real movement is made up of human beings who have never had any privilege to ignore, and those who have been fighting since before they were even born. The rest of us are, at best, simply operating in solidarity with these people. At worst, we're co-opting and appropriating their experiences, **overshadowing their struggles with privileged grievances,** and redirecting the *movement narrative* in a harmful way. The history of struggle in America in the last fifty years illustrates the worst case very clearly.

Creating a just and racism-free society is not only a matter of not abusing someone directly, we also need to address the ways in which the system oppresses and violates human beings of other races **on our behalf** without our having to lift a finger or say a nasty word. But if you are one of the whites who understands and truly wants to stand with all of our brothers and sisters in solidarity, there are some pointers to keep in mind:

- We should avoid taking leadership roles in any group that is working for social justice. We can't be certain that our empathy, as great as it may be, allows us to make good decisions on behalf of those who have been traumatized by oppression their entire lives
- We can and should use our privileged white voice to document crimes
- We can and should use our privilege and resources to help those who are struggling to access legal support

- We can offer resources that have come to us because of our privilege in support of the movement
- We can offer ourselves on the front lines risking arrest, shielding those who might pay a higher price in the justice system because of their skin color. Don't be self-indulgent; it is offensive to lack commitment, to bail and go home when the going gets tough. People of color don't have the option to *choose to play* or not
- We can understand that this **is not a joint struggle; there is no symmetry here** between our white experience and the experiences of people of other races
- We can listen to people of color and people with other world views, like Native and First Peoples: they ask that we work within our communities of privilege even harder to "*Change the Dream of the Whites*" than we work to help the oppressed cope with the results of that dream
- We cannot stop working on our inner worldview, working to understand and overcome our white privilege
- We can work to disrupt the status quo and use that disruption as a *teaching moment* to raise the awareness of other white people to their privilege

White activists must work within their own tribes and broader communities. Of course this will be a very difficult and even dangerous task, as one would expect in a society where racism and classism are so institutionalized. To People of Color, that would make the difference, not swamping protest marches that don't hold much credibility with them in the first place, or

taking over leadership of organizations that seek to address the needs of non-whites. To paraphrase a concept expressed by many marginalized people, *“It is good that you want to stand with us. But better it would be to change the dream, the story, of your dominant culture that threatens us. And we can’t; only you can do that from within.”*

Complaints from some white activists of how horribly they are treated and of the persecution they receive at the hands the police can come off as self-indulgent, especially when arrests or injuries of people of color are far more likely to happen, and on a far larger scale. White activists sometimes despair about how pointless and ineffective their efforts are in creating more awareness about the realities of the dominant culture within their own white communities but that should only spur them to be more creative in coming up with strategies to confront and challenge their society. For now, people of color must continue to work within their own communities in order to mobilize and inject our society with the spirit of volunteerism and social community that is now fragmenting due to neoliberal economic and mass incarceration policies that widen inequality, that increase aid dependency, debt, and consumerism, that splinter families, and that increase feelings of shame and hopelessness.

Let me phrase this another way, and be very, very blunt. Too often, white activists, despite viewing themselves as **revolutionary** or **anti-racist**, **still have all their original dominant-culture notions about class, power, race, sexuality, gender, property and morality fully intact.** People of color then let them debate **tactics** as if they are remotely acquainted with the experiences and struggles that society’s marginalized people have endured for centuries. They are not. There is no **common*

humanity* or *familiarity* by which the patronizing moralism of the few, elite minded is acceptable. They've **joined** a struggle, people of color didn't join theirs. They are the naïve and inexperienced ones, only now realizing something is amiss... but still they feel empowered to leap frog in front of a struggle that some have been fighting in for generations. It condones their ignorance and reinforces their sense of entitlement to even engage in a debate. Every assertion they make is based on the violences of exclusion, domination, silencing, marginalization, condemnation, disruption, and counterrevolution. Every decision they make just reinforces those violences. They cannot lead, period⁶¹.

No one is rejecting whites from the anti-racism movement, but simply calling yourself an anti-racist and coming to protests is not enough. White activists who do so claim, for the most part, to understand the privileges they enjoy due to being white and entitled while living in a colonial situation. But it is not always clear that they understand in practice how these privileges continue to manifest themselves in their interactions with people of color. Our enculturation is so deep, so pervasive, and so inherent in the existing power structures that we all must fit into in order to survive, that we continue to unconsciously parrot the lines and the ways of relating that we have been taught and that **keep us all in subjugation**. We also must recognize that *coming to help* those we deem needy of our assistance is just another way that we send a message that people of color are victims who need someone from the dominant culture to speak on their behalf. No one who is trying to help would say that they want to disempower others; yet that is exactly the message that many, on both sides of the racist line, will read into our actions. **The struggle**

⁶¹ Paraphrasing Anthony Choice

must be brought back to the people themselves, and one sure way to mobilize them to take action to free themselves is not through protests or speeches, but **through social community work**. Putting this concept into action was what so threatened the power structures that the Black Panthers were assassinated and obliterated as a social movement. Other movements suffer this fate as soon as they become effective replacements for the dominant paradigm, thus making it irrelevant. As Paolo Freire rightly pointed out:

“No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption.”

We have mostly focused in this chapter on race and class, and yet gender discrimination is also deeply intertwined within this culture as well. Note, please, what Dmitry Orlov has to say about gender and class:

“There is a big unintended consequence that results from treating women (or men) as a (fake) political class: it cuts across the **real** class lines, to the great disadvantage of the lower classes. America's class war against its lower classes is a permanent, full-spectrum, total war, and it is by this point quite close to total victory. Among its foot-soldiers there are numerous higher-class, educated women ensconced in various official positions who, while supposedly championing the rights of women and children, end up oppressing lower-class, uneducated men. To do so, they rely on the services of America's oversized criminal-industrial complex, **which imprisons a larger share of the population than**

Stalin did during the height of his purges, with the majority of the inmates male, non-white, uneducated, and poor. Add to this the fact that in the U.S., as women joined the *workforce* (a term full of inane puffery), family incomes stagnated (women's wages have been subtracted from the men's) while family costs went up (because domestic services such as child care and food preparation now had to be paid for). [My comment: he neglects to mention that even in 2013, women are paid less than 80% of what men make for the same job.] The results of all this are plain to see: the US leads the world in the percentage of children brought up fatherless [because their fathers are in jail], with many of them on the public assistance that is becoming precarious. Eventually *men's liberation* [or prison or sentencing reform] will come and all these inmates will be freed—once the system runs out of money and can no longer spend the \$60-80k or so a year it costs to keep someone in jail⁶². Since jail is a deeply dehumanizing experience, the role these freed inmates will play in society upon release is unlikely to be positive. This seems to be the unintended but hardly unexpected consequence of politicizing gender: **all fall down.**” [emphasis added]

Our philosophical and theological systems all acknowledge the inherent dignity of all human beings. We say that we believe that all people are equal, though we accept conditions in the world in which all people cannot live with dignity, and where any claim of equality is a farce. In this case we understand the principles but do not live accordingly. How can we begin to live the

⁶² Or as in New York City in 2012, \$124,000 per inmate

truth that bubbles up from within our hearts? How can we align our political and economic lives to coincide with our spiritual understanding?

Why are we afraid of talking about racism if we are not afraid that we are racist? Why are we afraid of asking questions about capitalism if we are not capitalists? Why are we afraid of talking about genocide if we are not murderers? Why are we afraid of talking about imperialism if we are comfortable ending it by bringing all troops home from the more than 135 countries we now *occupy*? **When we are afraid to talk about what is real and true, we are being manipulated, suppressed, or hypocritical.** Or maybe all three. Ultimately issues of race and class and just the issues that all human beings face: maintaining our dignity in all of our relationships. What are we now denying or ignoring in order to perpetuate our comfort? Without dignity, we are incomplete and lack wholeness, or integrity. When will we tire of being incomplete?

Let me close this section by quoting Michelle:

“We’ve allowed a human rights nightmare to happen on our watch. We have spent more than a trillion dollars on the *War on Drugs*, when we could have spent it educating, rehabilitating, and supporting those among us who need help. But if we return to the rates of incarceration we had in the 1970s, 4 in 5 now in jail must be released, more than a million jobs would be lost in prisons, and Wall Street corporations would see profits vanish. How’s that going to happen?

“We have to begin by telling the truth: that we have birthed a caste-like system in the US; tell it to all, in church, in schools. We have to build an underground railroad for those who get released: support them with food, housing, and love. We have to create spaces

where they are welcomed, not shamed or stigmatized. In truth we are all criminals: speeding? Drank under age? Taken something without asking? There but for the grace of God go I; we have all made mistakes, and expect a second chance. End this *War on Drugs*. Return our rights, recognize that prison is to rehabilitate, not just punish, and act accordingly in hiring and in the prison environment itself. Use prisons only for violence; any and all nonviolent offenders get counseling instead of jail time.

“This whole system rests on the core belief that some of us are not worthy of genuine care, compassion, and concern.”

And this belief, my friends, ***has got to change.***

Bringing Spirit To Revolution

“People are like stained glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the Sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within.”

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross

The most important part of our work begins now. This path we tread flows out from our broken hearts; filled past bursting with our love and compassion, shattered with grief as we endure profound and tragic loss. Compassion arises from the shards of a broken heart. Phrased differently, our capacity for ***wholeheartedness*** can never be greater than our willingness to be brokenhearted. Great grief gives rise to great joy. Can we find strength within ourselves to be willing to touch the scary, painful ***other*** in order to be complete? Can we stop denying the grief we feel when we empathize with a mother losing her child to starvation, and use that pain to motivate changing our consciousness?

The duality of our world brings us people who are deeply in touch with their Creator and mystical experience, and others whose deepest beliefs are tightly bound by the nature of science and logic. We are all somewhere on this spectrum, living between the **known self** of our thinking, egoic mind, and the **felt self** of our empathic, receptive, visceral mind. As with any idea, emotion, feeling, or action, balance is helpful. We join the opposites to create a ***whole***: when our known self that thinks and our felt self that ***is*** are in balance, our heart can open and express its own wisdom; and that is when Spirit truly comes alive within our being.

In our modern world we pride ourselves on our *accomplishments*. Most of them are due to the logical, rational, thinking, known self that is determined to *do* rather than *be*. More and more people each year renounce, or allow to fade away, any sense of spirituality in their conscious awareness. We use tools and knowledge that has been *proven* using Science; what need is there for *superstition*? If I ask you to tell me about yourself, you will likely begin by telling me your name and *what you do*. What you do is, after all, the most important aspect about you, right? It's how we define ourselves, measure our worth to society, compare ourselves to others, take responsibility for ourselves. And after you tell me what you do, you will likely begin to tell me what you have *done* in the past, and then things that you *know*, and maybe even things that you *have*; all stuff that is important to you. Rarely, if ever do we talk about how we *feel into* our environment, or how we let ourselves just **be** in the world.

There is a lack of consensus regarding the philosophy and theology on which we ground our concern for sustainability. Is spirituality necessary? Is sustainability purely pragmatic? Do we need to conserve the world to sustain ourselves? Should we have a more expansive concern about the non-human living world than we do today? Do other living things have a claim on us? There are no simple or obvious answers. We all have some general reverence for life, but most of us value the lives of our children and our friends more than other humans, and other humans more than we value the lives of other animals. Despite a lack of clarity about how to value various forms of life, we have to understand that we are part of a larger living world and that we should be careful: when we carve it up into categories we lose the interconnectedness that brings meaning and purpose to every aspect of our world. Tear apart a car, leaving all

the parts arranged on the ground. Now pick up just one part, any part. Hand it to someone who did not watch the disassembly process, and ask them to place that part where it belongs inside the now-bare chassis, and what that particular part does when the car is operating. Some parts are easily definable: tires, or the steering wheel, for instance. Most others are inscrutable, and without being integrated in the system, they are utterly useless and bereft of meaning.

Science tells us that we actually have neurons in our heart and in our gut. The neural net in our gut must be quite independent of the net inside our skulls: people who sever their spinal cord, and have no communication between brain and body, still have a functioning digestive system. Something has to be calling the shots down there, right? Science forces us into a 4D world. Science has to measure, to prove, to separate and define. Science can't define consciousness, so it leaves the fifth dimension out of its equations and denies its reality. Our ego denies destiny. Most would agree with this statement: "I can only be what I can be". But when I live in the fifth dimension, I know that I am where I am in this moment because of all the previous steps that have been taken over the entire 13.7 billion years of the life of the Universe. I open myself to my innate energy's purpose for me and my evolution, and how is that not destiny? Why would I try to deny that? I touch my innate longing to feel, to love, to move towards, to engage with; and note how good it feels to fulfill my purpose. Still, it is only an invitation: I am free to accept, to open to the experience, or not. It is not a destiny that is fixed and set in concrete. **I am perfect where I am, and yet I remain open to change.** Buddha said, *"Your work is to discover your work, and then with all your heart, to give yourself to it."* Will you dance with me?

We don't *think* energy, we experience it. When our experience *feels important*, what do we do? We speed up our mind to think about all the possibilities and pitfalls... but experiencing the world is experiencing your *self*. Falling back into thought deadens us to what we learn when we allow ourselves to just experience the energy in which we move. Thoughts create a model of our world; but we can't live in a model. Try to think and thus experience love, or blue, or hot; we cannot. Thoughts are always incomplete and imperfect.

Because we spend so much time in our thoughts though, we miss much of what is going on around us. Without often being consciously aware, we experience pheromones, body language, and *gut reactions*. Try this small thought experiment:

Take a deep breath in, hold it for a few seconds, then slowly release. Now I assume that at some point in your life you have owned a car; if not, substitute the most expensive electronic device you have now when the instructions mention a car. Picture in your mind your current, or most recently owned car, as it sits parked in its usual place somewhere close by. Now imagine that you are going to your car; getting up from the chair as you read this, walking out of the building or into the garage, and stop at the moment that you first see the car. What *emotion* do you have as you see the car again? Go deep into your belly; is there pride that you have worked hard to own this vehicle? Is there worry because this car has problems that you have been unable to remedy? Is there a gladness in knowing that you love driving it and now get to drive it again? What is that first emotion you have when you reconnect with your car?

The point of the exercise is this: we have emotions about what enters our awareness all the time; not just our cars, but people, plants and animals, news, and all the little thoughts and ideas that fight for our attention inside our mind. Our subconscious mind screens out all the inputs it deems unnecessary; and in our current cultural paradigm, it preferences thoughts and ideas over emotions and feelings. What is suggested here is not that you need to *learn* a new way of being. Indeed, we already know how to feel into our world. What is needed is merely to allow our emotions and feelings more space in which they can be *recognized*.

Our mirror neurons allow us to *feel* the direct experience of others as if it is real. We react to data from entangled particles that may be far away as if the data is our own: we hear countless stories like this one, involving a fourth-grade student who one day stood up from his desk in the middle of class and raced, without a word, home. There he found his mother, collapsed and hemorrhaging on the floor of the kitchen, unable to move to the phone and call for help. "I was hoping you would come," she said, as he called the ambulance to come and save her life. How can we explain this using just our rational, logical, scientific worldview? Scientists tell us that we react based on clues that are 40% verbal, 60% non-verbal. That means that emotions and sensations are more important than words or ideas. And the anomalies continue, involving countless numbers of people who sense storms, earthquakes, fires, accidents, in advance, either through dreams or by merely quieting their thinking and listening to the small voice inside their head. One more personal story I was told by the people involved:

*Pickens County Alabama, 4 am, 27 April 2011:
The couple woke from sound sleep, sat up in bed,
looked at each other, and asked, "What woke us*

up?” Unable to answer the question, they got up, opened the door of their manufactured home, and looked out into their yard on top of a ridge north of the town of Gordo. All was quiet; no dogs barking, no roosters crowing, no wind rustling leaves, nothing. No hint of what had awakened them. They crawled back into bed.

At 4:15, she sat up again, and said, “We have to go!”

He asked, “What do you mean?”

*“We have to get out of here, **now!**” She leapt from the bed and began hurriedly to dress. He took the hint and got up too. They jumped in their car and drove half a mile along the ridge to the fire station; he was a volunteer firefighter and that felt like the best place to go. They had barely turned the car around in the station’s lot when they saw the tornado come up the hill, lift their home like a toy, carry it across the road and fling it down in a thousand pieces. They would have been dead; but she had listened to that small inner voice when she could have dismissed it as paranoia, and he had listened to her when he could have said, “You’re nuts! Go back to sleep.”*

Mirror neurons mean that we constantly act and react based on the emotions of people around us. We are not islands of individual consciousness, no matter how separate we may feel. This is what feeds the consensus trance: we want to fit in, to be accepted by our peers, so that we can continue to feed off the emotions of those we like. To espouse a different point of view is to introduce a new emotion that likely won’t be accepted by the group. What does it look like when fear is the dominant narrative of the trance? Fear of the other, fear of

inflation, fear of systemic default (economic, environmental, political, loss of social safety net)? For the answer, just look around. One key might be to work on holding multiple perspectives at once. If you get too involved in a story of fear or doom and gloom, you can be stuck and frozen, like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming vehicle. Yet if you manage to just harden your heart and plow on through the bad news, you quickly burn out. So it's not about becoming cynical or scared stiff, it's about holding the truth of the situation while simultaneously looking for the small inner voice that is listening to the energy and finding a path, like water bubbling up through broken bits of rock and shell or like love bubbling out of a broken heart.

Halfway measures will not be sufficient; please show up all the way. Science explained a lot of the world that before we thought was magical or mystical. But it still doesn't know everything: men can use the observed effects of gravity to fly to the Moon and back, but we can't explain *how* or *why* gravity works as it does. We can use *desert varnish*⁶³ to create art that lasts thousands of years; but we still can't explain what it is, how to make it today, or how it came to be used so long ago. Some scientists now point to this phenomena as proof that there are other types of life forms sharing our world just as viruses and bacteria share the spaces enclosed by our bodies. Termed the shadow biosphere, they ask, "*How can we identify life if it is based on something other than carbon or the four bases of twelve bases that make up the DNA of all *life as we know it*?*"

⁶³ Desert varnish: manganese, arsenic and silica that forms a metallic sheen on rocks in arid deserts around the world, particularly in the Atacama Desert in Chile and the Mojave in California.

How does the fish detect the water in which it swims, the butterfly the air in which it flies? We perceive the world around us as being solid; yet matter takes up only a percent of the total space, the remaining 99% holds nothing. Fill a glass with as much water as possible; yet once you have done that, you can still manage to insert a sponge into the water without spilling a drop. And the water **looked so solid!** A fountain of water looks solid too, in a different way, yet our fingers penetrate it with ease: it is only an illusion based on our perspective that makes us think of it as solid. Your skin looks like a solid barrier between *you* and the outer world; yet water and other molecules pass back and forth through it all the time. Look at your skin under a high-powered microscope and you do not see a solid barrier, you see lots of space with an occasional electron or other bit of matter. And when we understand that we are not mere products of our genes, or our upbringing, forever destined to replay tapes from childhood or doomed to diseases or behaviors that we can't possibly understand or control, we open the door to *conscious* evolution; **change that we choose**, and we gain the ability to hack a new path through the jungle of our troubles where before there was only a tangled mass of vines and vegetation. We have been taught, usually by the culture and often by parents who meant well but were emotionally distant or unavailable, to fiercely hold onto pleasure, even as our pleasure diminishes; to resent and push away pain, so that we suffer more when the pain remains; and to numb out or distract ourselves from *ordinary* experiences, so that we move through life in a dream-like, half-awake awareness. None of these have to be: by rising out of the ruts of habitual reactions we allow discernment, experience, and intelligence to birth new responses and new ways of creating joy and love. Remember: **forgiveness is the fragrance a violet**

leaves on the boot that just crushed it. We can manifest this understanding: I give you my best even at my worst of times....

There is a problem with relying entirely upon science to solve our issues: we don't yet know enough to be able to predict the *unforeseen* consequences of our new discoveries. When we searched for a method to use to dispense liquids, we thought the chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) would be a fantastic carrier; it was an inert gas, meaning it didn't react with other molecules. It could carry paint or perfume and leave that material intact and unchanged. We even awarded a Nobel Prize to the person who advanced the notion of using it in aerosol sprays. How were we to know that in the upper reaches of our atmosphere, cosmic rays would strip out chlorine molecules and allow them to destroy the ozone layer? *We were hardly even aware there was an ozone layer;* we couldn't possibly have predicted this chain of events that would leave us vulnerable to the radiation from our Sun. So now I ask, "*What makes you think that GMOs are safe?*" What unforeseen consequences are we facing today, as these *Nobel-worthy* ideas are released into our world? When will we let go of the idea that the answer to technology's failings is more technology? Now that we have screwed up the atmosphere so bad through our blind acceptance of burning fossil fuels for energy that our climate is changing in ways that will make it difficult if not impossible to grow the food we need to survive, how is it that we think we can ignore the burgeoning methane vents in the Arctic, create new technologies that will remove carbon dioxide from the air and *bury* it underground where it will remain forever, or seed clouds to force rain where none would fall otherwise? Why do we think that rising sea levels will **only** force us to build higher off the ground or

further from the shore, as if even that adaptation is to be cheaply and easily done?

We are air; we are water; we are energy. The idea that we travel around in our own little capsule, rebreathing air that was created just for us, is arrogant and ignorant. Air and water and energy connect us to every other animal, vegetable, and mineral on our planet. What affects that rock over there also affects us, albeit with different consequences and over different time scales. Surely, you think, that rock is not conscious! But like the butterfly not believing the redwood tree is alive due to its perspective of time, might we also be a victim of our own time bias when we discount the idea of a conscious rock? Of course there is no nervous system inside the rock, and doubtless no *soul* as our culture defines it. But if consciousness to some degree is a fundamental aspect of the energy that underlies everything, then that rock would possess consciousness even if it doesn't look like anything we can imagine with our own embodied mind. Moving up from rocks, could we speculate that there is consciousness in violins, viruses, or violets, or voles? What about dolphins or bonobos? Where do **you** draw the line and say, "this side conscious, this side inert"? Certainly where you place that distinction, and where anyone else places it, will be different. What if you are wrong? And moving past human beings and our consciousness along this spectrum, what about bees? And bee hives; a different type of consciousness the hive mind, and different than the consciousness of one particular bee for sure. But it would be hard to argue that a hive is not conscious in some manner, even if not quite a human way. And if a hive can be conscious, what about a pod, or superpod, of dolphins? A watershed? Gaia, as our planet is called by many when they point to this very notion of a *conscious* Earth? What does it mean if there are myriad ways that consciousness

manifests, most of which we can't even imagine, but that make up the fundamental forces of our world nonetheless? How should we act differently, once we recognize this?

And speaking of the myriad ways consciousness manifests, maybe instead of a rock a more understandable example is an octopus. Man has 100 billion neurons, this animal only 500 million. The brain of the octopus is also structured very differently: there is a *core processor*, but well more than half of its neurons are distributed throughout each of its eight tentacles. Each arm controls its own actions and reports back to the core; like in cloud computing, where individuals collaborate on a centrally-stored project, the octopus coordinates its actions while leaving the mechanics of executing decisions to the specific part involved. We would not normally ascribe

consciousness to an octopus, yet Katherine Harmon Courage tells us an interesting story in her book, *"Octopus! The Most Mysterious Creature in the Sea"*:

“On the way to feed her [Jean Boal, a behavioral researcher at Millersville University] octopus subjects one day, she suspected they might not like what was on offer: they preferred the very freshest of frozen squid, but the stuff she bore was a bit stale. She doled it out anyway, walking down the line of tanks, dropping a subpar serving into each one. When she finally finished, she walked back to the first octopus to see if it had gone for the meal. The food was nowhere to be seen, but the cephalopod was waiting for Boal – **waiting and watching**. This octopus locked eyes with her and moved slowly sideways to the drain in the front right corner of its tank. Pausing above the outflow, it shot the stale squid out of its arms and down the drain,

continuing to stare (or was it glare?) at Boal, who got the message.”

In an odd sort of way, this story fills my heart with joy: we are not alone! There are other-than-human, conscious beings in our midst! How many are there? How can we begin to connect with them, and to relate with them in ways that do not center around making them our food?

What happens if we raise the idea of taxing businesses that want to use the air we all share as a toxic waste dump? What happens when we suggest that society fine the companies or individuals that want to turn our fresh water into a toxic slurry solely to wash tar or gas out of the ground? What happens when we point out that the media we watch: videos, television programs, and movies actually change our thought patterns and affect our collective energy field? We haven't learned this fundamental lesson after all of our work: you can't solve problems by only treating the symptoms, nor with the same consciousness that created the problem in the first place. The paradigm must shift. You can win battles and stop the drilling for oil in a particular place for some amount of time through protests and blockades, but unless you shift the course of society away from using oil in the first place, eventually you will lose the war. Protecting the four sacred elements of air, water, food, and shelter; the fundamental aspects of life that we must have in order to live, should be the highest priority of our lives. And yet money has taken over the top spot on that pedestal. We are altering the planet on a geological scale within a single person's lifetime: population has tripled, communication has become global and instantaneous, food has moved away from where we live to somewhere thousands of miles away, and the toxics we send into the atmosphere now encircle the planet, all

just in the lifetime of someone who is today 70 years old. The stars used to light up the heavens on a dark moonless night, the Sun used to be blocked by flocks of birds, the rivers were so full of salmon on their annual migration that you could not see the water; just ask an elder what they remember of life and Nature from their childhood. We act as if we can shoehorn Nature into our economy, and win some kind of contest. We have forgotten where exactly we come from, and where exactly that we live.

Gregg Braden, in “Deep Truth”, quotes Nobel Prize-winning physicist Neils Bohr when he explains the title and concept of his book: “*It is the hallmark of any deep truth that its negation is also a deep truth.*” Our modern world is based on the *deep truth* that our **known self**: our ego, our rational, logical mind, and our *inherent* separation from the world outside of our own skin; is how we interact with life. We have a word, *proprioception* that means our sense of where our body is in space, reinforcing the idea that the only important fact is **where** we are, because that will determine what we are able to **do**. The known mind concentrates on what it knows – what it has learned in the past – and what it will do next – a decision it will make based on what it remembers resulting from past, similar situations. The known mind cannot just *be* in the moment, open to whatever energy is moving through it, receptive and ready to interact with what *is*. It is the *masculine* way to focus on doing; just as it is the *feminine* way to focus on *being*. The felt self has no word pointing to how it places itself in the world as the known self does; instead it senses the spaces everywhere. In a way it negates the body by noting not what is matter, but by noting what is *empty*. Sogyal Rinpoche writes, “*All effort comes from not being spacious.*” This is important precisely because, **by**

inhabiting our spacious world, we inhabit our

Source: that energy field from which we arise and to which we always return. When we are tense, we fortify ourselves against an expected assault. This enclosing attitude is the opposite of spacious, and is why we struggle so. Some people see the Universe as inherently *safe*; others live from a foundation of fear. We must feel safe if we are to be comfortable in the spaciousness of all-that-is. The known self depends upon science's 4D world view that is **explicitly indifferent** to human beings; but our felt self depends upon a 5D world that includes consciousness and requires human beings' participation. The Universe favors life that harmonizes with it. And thus it is that the deep truth that negates the known self: the felt self, is itself a deep truth.

Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of the art of Aikido, says:

“The secret of Aikido is to harmonize ourselves with the movement of the Universe and bring ourselves into accord with the Universe itself. When an energy tries to fight with me, the Universe itself, he has to break the harmony of the universe... hence at the moment he has the mind to fight me, he is already defeated.”

Harmony is the coherence of the whole: body, emotion, mind, and spirit. But we can only harmonize these elements by surrendering to what *is*, to what the movement of the Universe is bringing us in the moment; we too, cannot win a fight with the Universe if we try to *control* any outcome. When we think we can succeed in controlling some life or some form we are only using the 4 dimensions and are using a worldview that is incomplete. It is only when harmony is broken that authority and control take over, and sometimes appear to succeed. But authority and control can never have the whole answer, because they operate from an incomplete acceptance of reality. Peace is not something we *do*. It

is instead an acceptance of the whole, of integrity, and thus an acceptance of all that is true. *Full of peace* is something that we **are**.

Our modern world has done a great job of convincing us that *surrender*, or giving up control, is a bad idea, a bad way to *be*. We think that by surrendering control we will be destroyed. But surrender does not destroy the most important part of *me*; **it only destroys the illusion of control**. This culture tells us that our will is good. But will is only a desire to control. Having a stronger will means we will have less of a relationship with that which we wish to get to submit to our will; we become like a bull in a china shop in order to exercise our will over others. Will-full solutions involve a lot of effort from us. If we act with integrity and wholeness, we find we eat without effort, we speak without effort, we listen without effort, and most importantly, we **connect and relate** without effort. When our known self lets go of control and the need to *create reality*, the felt self is free to feel the surrounding world and to expand our *self* to include the whole: to become integrated. Ultimately there can be no self-achieved independence. There is no room for ideas in the real world; there is only room to *be*. Here's a thought experiment about surrender:

Imagine... standing on a soft, grassy riverbank. You could throw, barely, a rock and hit the other side. The river moves past, an eddy or two near your feet, a rock or two on the near shore sending ripples across the placid surface. A movement out of the corner of your eye catches your attention; you turn towards it and see a rowboat, empty, rounding the bend upstream and drifting in your direction. The river's current carries it slowly along, it will pass by you in water shallow enough for you to wade out and catch it.

The water seems warm enough, as you carefully work your way out into the river, all the while eyeing the approaching boat. The mud of the river's bottom squishes up between your toes. You frighten a water spider, and it scrambles across the surface towards the shore as quickly as its legs, and the current, allow. You turn your attention back to the boat, and as the water reaches your waist and it becomes more difficult to stand against the current, you reach out and grab its gunwale. Bracing yourself against the pull of the river on the boat and your legs, you begin to fight to keep your balance.

The river seems stronger out here. Besides, now you are fighting to move the boat as well as your own body. After being in the water some minutes, it seems colder now than when you first stepped in. Your back is beginning to tire, holding the boat and fighting for balance, both activities using muscles you don't exercise sitting at your desk when you work. The river bottom seems more slippery, and suddenly you stub your toe against a rock. The temptation to let go of the boat and return to shore empty-handed is beginning to gnaw at the corners of your mind. But still you struggle.

Let's pause for a moment, and ask, "What's going on here?" Is this about you trying to control a situation, rather than *go with the flow*? Are you imagining what you will be able to accomplish, once this boat belongs to you? Are you thinking of the money you might get from selling it? Are you planning a fishing trip in it? Are you loath to let go, because you've already spent so much time and energy getting to this point? How tired are you willing to become, and

literally, how close to death, before you release the dream the boat represents? And most importantly, are these the only valid questions you could be asking yourself? Are there other ways of perceiving this situation? What if you surrendered to the situation, what would that look like? It might be like letting go of the boat, letting it drift on wherever the river wants to take it. What if you climbed into it, and joined it in its journey? What adventures might you experience, what wonders might you see? What if you let it carry you along as you floated, together, until you found a new beach to explore?

Our culture leads us to want to control everything, **when surrender might be the more exciting path.**

When we live within the experiences of the felt self, there is no distinction between Nature and Spirit, nor any battle between the religious/sacred and the day-to-day. **Every moment is lived in Nature and in Spirit and in sacred space.** Riane Eisler, in her book *“Sacred Pleasure”*, points out that even sex is an integral part of the day-to-day life of people living within the felt self. It is, after all, woman’s creative sexual power that brings forth life. In Primal art there is a preponderance of women, and they are depicted as having agency, not being dependent upon the men that are typically shown as hunters. There are no depictions of a “Father God”, and the Goddesses are shown from the viewpoint of being the “Giver of Life”. This makes sense if the indigenous views hold value in the *feminine* *being* rather than the *masculine* *doing*. How have men usurped the independence and power of women? By thousands of years of rape, of relegating women to second-class citizenship, by forbidding them to own property, by calling menstruation *dirty* and treating

women as if this is something they *do* because they want to create a problem, and by calling sex *dirty* and holding double standards about virginity and the expression of physical love. More recently, our modern culture celebrates violence in our media, entertainment, and sport as if death is a desired outcome, and at the same time we demonize sex, making it a secret that we can't discuss in polite company. We are scandalized by a bare breast but not by scenes of a chemical gas attack shown our TV. Imagine how it would feel to live in a community that celebrated sacred birth and loving relationships, rather than living as isolated individuals celebrating violence and death.

Each time we disconnect from *being* or our felt self, we retreat into idea. At that point our actions are limited to our *idea* of what should be. We eliminate mystery and possibility; we not only fail to imagine everything that is possible, **we can't imagine how much is possible**. Would you rather have the future that you imagine, or the one that the Universe is able to provide? If you feel the Universe is *safe*, obviously you would be better off to release your fear and open yourself to what possibility lies beyond your own feeble imagination! The known self expects the body to respond and obey it; it expects the same from the world outside, too. The brain has thus divided itself from the body and the world, living instead separated from the energy and wisdom that underlies all being. If we grew our own food we wouldn't waste 40% of it like our industrial food system does now. If we made our own chairs and tables, we wouldn't take old ones to the dump just because we want to repaint the living room a different color. If we had to carry all of our own water from a nearby stream, we wouldn't pee and poo in it inside our home. These all are symptoms of our separation: from Nature, and from the sources of all that we consume. How can this possibly

end well? But when we truly rest in being, not doing, we have only self-revelation with all life we encounter, companionship with all life we meet, and the love of all life we share together to sustain us. What more could we ask for?

When we live only in our heads, our self-worth is based on what we have, do, and know. Then we live in perpetual fear that we don't have, do, or know **enough**. No amount of having, doing, or knowing will ever relieve the fear. If you know millionaires and ask them, they will invariably tell you that they still need *more* money, have *more* work to do, and need to learn *more* about how to get what they want. Because we see the world as inanimate objects and resources that we can use, we are insensitive to the idea that the world might need us, or call to us, or relate with us. Kill who you **know** as your **self**, or your **self** will kill you. I am sure that at some point in your life, you have been very generous. You may still be, giving more than ever, even giving until it hurts. But most people in America today are under a deep delusion: they make more but give less, afraid that they don't have **enough** to be free to give some of what they have to others. Time and again, we see that the people with the least are those who give the most. Perhaps it is because they know what it is like to live with nothing, or because they are less attached to their few possessions and more attached to the relationships that get them through the toughest times. We leave the upscale market, canvas bags stuffed with expensive but organic, healthy food, and avert our eyes as we pass the table where a person sits collecting donations for the local food bank. We live in denial. Is it just that we cherish being on the hamster wheel of working at demeaning jobs to earn bank credit to buy plastic products to break or throw away while wages stagnate and propaganda-

fostered consumption brings ever-decreasing *happiness*? Is that why we are here, alive in this time?

We move through life: sometimes dizzy, sometimes alert. We can get sidetracked: valuing pain more than pleasure; getting lost in the dead-ends of our mind or memories; accepting the crazy idea of *guilt by being born*. We choose, in every moment, our response: depress or bless. We can keep the ego, the supervisor, the authoritative thinker in the head who stands apart and *knows*⁶⁴; or we can surrender the notion of control and blend like water into the One, fusing masculine and feminine, effortlessly joining the world, and being present for what currents of energy and love move through this moment. This release of knowing and control does not put us in a state of being that will last forever; it needs constant attention to maintain the felt self and to remain connected with all that is. We can live fully, wholly, in our integrity as we gift our energies, desires, and talents to the world around us. It is our greatest challenge to live this way within a culture that not only denies that the One even exists, but insists that we are separate, isolated animals who have no time for contemplation or energy for compassion as we go about winning the evolutionary competition for scarce resources. Spiritual understanding has always been the door to the freedom and riches of our human hearts. Our modern world has replaced this understanding with material goods and has closed that door. To grow we must, like a snake, simply shed our skin of materialism. Our heart never went away; it just got covered with a misguided belief that stuff could make us happy. What must our new consciousness include? What hard

⁶⁴ It is no wonder that we seek to control our world: as God is everywhere, with any bit of control we are *controlling God*. How can we be more powerful than that?

decisions, changes, morals, truths, or agreements will be required? What will help you change your mind?

The known self values the rational to the exclusion of the experiential; the felt self is the opposite. When religion leaves gut-based experiential and becomes mind-based belief, the heart is short-changed, made smaller and more incomplete. How can we balance between the known and the felt and thus fully open our hearts? That balance would necessarily include what the felt self is good at: paying close attention to reality in a manner that is fully embodied; and what the known self is good at, namely fully discerning, refining, and understanding principles.

Here is a different answer to the question, “Why am I here?” I first came across this paradigm by reading *“Busting Loose From the Money Game: Mind-Blowing Strategies for Changing the Rules of a Game You Can't Win”* by Robert Scheinfeld. This concept is also explained in the video, *“The Human Experience”* which at the time I am writing this book, is available in full on YouTube. I will also note that these are merely the avenues that exposed me to this idea; these ideas have been promulgated by many before this. Let me see if I can sketch out this paradigm.

Imagine the Universe in the very beginning. Maybe it exists before the event our scientists call the Big Bang, maybe not. But once it does exist, what is there for Universe to experience? Is there life? Is there feeling, emotion, knowledge, understanding... love? Would life begin as a way for the Universal Mind to bring feeling into awareness? What if *we* humans came to Earth to play a game, kind of like going to an amusement park. What if we are just manifestations of the Universal Energy, that some might call *God*, trying to expand its experience of being in the Universe using embodied consciousness. Of course it wouldn't be any fun to play if

we knew how reality is constructed: the engineer of the roller coaster has a much different experience riding that coaster than an 8-year old on his first ride. So *we* each manifest a small portion of Spirit into a human body and set about having new experiences, having forgotten where we came from and who we really are. If we adopt the point of view that releases judgment and just settles back to enjoy whatever happens, then we can lose the horror we might otherwise feel at seeing a particularly gruesome event, like a chemical gas attack for instance. This is not to say that we all get carte blanche to force experiences onto others. It is merely to point out that if we have any control at all in this world, our control is limited to our own experience: both in the choices we make that create our experiences, and more importantly, how we choose to react once an event takes place. This brings up what is for many people, the reason they cannot grasp onto this explanation of our purpose here on Earth: they can't believe that someone would be born merely to die in a house fire at the age of eight months, or of cancer at the age of eight years, or in a nuclear accident at the age of eighty years. They judge that the experience is *horrible* and without merit or redemption. And from their limited and entranced human viewpoint, they are likely correct. Judgment arises within one's mind, closely influenced by ego. But what if we are here to serve, not just to feel good? **What if our souls don't judge an experience by the fleeting physical or emotional pain of a body that is unreal?**

Our souls seek to discover who we truly are, and we use experiences as our path to our goal. But just as when we use a car to travel from one place to another we don't become the car, so when our soul uses a body to have experiences we do not suddenly become the body. In much the same way, we *think* that the voice inside our

head, our ego, is real. But who is it that listens to the ego's voice? Who is it that witnesses the world through our eyes, without the judgment, commentary, and interpretation our ego provides? Is it clear to you that just as you are not your body, you also are not your ego? It is precisely these mechanisms; thinking we are our bodies, thinking we are our egos; that keep us unaware of who we are. They keep us from knowing how our consciousness creates our world and how we can use it to make the fundamental changes that we desire. We are so trapped within this sensation of being our bodies that **we fight to stay imprisoned**. The more time we spend listening to our ego, the harder it is to put it in its rightful place as our servant, not as our master. This is why the society constantly feeds our ego messages to keep it engaged; this is why meditation or contemplative prayer is so useful, because it lets us gain perspective on life without the voice of our ego being the only source of our actions.

Let me be explicit: we are ultimately all part of the same whole. We are not so separate that I can hurt you without hurting myself. And the Universe, our Source, our ultimate being, is also experiencing itself in rocks, and oaks, and violet-green swallows. Experience is the goal, not safety, or accumulating more stuff than your neighbors. And because everything changes, or as scientists say everything is evolving, our society and our environment are changing as our consciousness changes. Thus we can have different experiences, rather than just reruns of what others have done before. And this also means that the planet and its travails are a reflection of the changes in our own consciousness. Because we are at war with ourselves and trying desperately to deny who we truly are, we see war and secrecy and denial everywhere we look in our world. This means our reality is not *fixed* and immutable.

Ultimately, our awareness is what makes things the way they are, and we can choose to create something different!

Once we understand why we are here, and that our reality is a construct put together by the collective consciousness, it makes any thoughts of *ownership* and exploitation ludicrous. You may think that science teaches us that matter is solid; in fact, it now teaches us the opposite. The famous *double slit* experiments of Thomas Young, since reproduced in much greater detail, demonstrate that matter behaves as a wave or a particle depending upon if it is or will be observed, proves that consciousness creates the conditions we call matter. Science says the nothing can travel at speeds faster than light, but *entangled* particles communicate instantly no matter their location in the Universe. Culture says that man is the only *aware* life in the known Universe; yet not only have several animals been shown to be self-aware, plants have been shown to have an electrical reaction to the death of shrimp nearby. It is becoming more and more difficult to continue the charade of separation, Man vs. the entirety of Nature, and the other games of denial and control we use allow our society to ruin the Earth on which we depend for our life. Given what science now begrudgingly admits, how can you possibly have a claim on something as transient and ephemeral as land, which you didn't actually create yourself? Is it a **valid** assumption that because your ancestors were the first to grab *possession* of a plot of land when certain rules went into effect that you have the right to control it now⁶⁵? Every plot of land that can

⁶⁵ John asks Tom, "How did you get your land?" Tom: "From my parents." John: "How did they get it?" T: "From *their* parents." J: "How did they get it?" T: "They fought the Indians

be sold today was at some point in the past, part of the space we all shared in common. It is only because of the manmade artifice of *ownership* that we have been turned into resource-challenged societies. That is a choice that can be changed, as our consciousness changes.

Within the modern American culture, we have been given an *ego*. Our ego is a limiter; limiting our reality to a set of rules given to us by parents, rulers, media, and it is meant to lead us to have a particular experience of our life in this society. Ego reminds us of how to *properly* behave, what is expected of us, and what to prioritize when we make decisions and plans. One of the basic rules we live by is that to be, we must have. This is wrong. What if we come to realize that it is so terribly incorrect, and decide to have a different experience? This is the stage of development that many of us find ourselves at today. We also quickly realize that the world is not like this because we lack rights or freedoms, given to us by a government. It is like this because of us: our consciousness, our limited understanding of what is real. We cannot be free until we free ourselves from our programmed ego and our propagandized mind. The ego wants to keep us living the small life, taking no risks, remaining safe by following the same path laid out for us by those in charge. How do we step up and begin to play our big game instead? How do we step into experience, listen to our heart's call, reach outside the envelope of *safe*, and take on new experiences that broaden and deepen our wisdom?

At this point, I want to ask: how is this feeling in you? Does any of this resonate, sound true, or fit with perspectives that you have struggled unsuccessfully to

for it." J: "Then *I'll fight you* for it!" What is wrong with this logic?

reconcile with the ways of behaving that you have been taught? Does it feel correct that I am not the clothes I wear, the job I do, the books I read, the politician I vote for, the neighborhood I live in, the number of digits in my bank account, or the color of my skin? If it does, then how can we bust out of the tiny box that we inhabit when we let these things limit our expression of who we are? Each time one of us sets aside our ego and steps out of the box, others who are left behind wonder how we did that, and more importantly, why? As they see how we are being ourselves, they soon become willing to step out too. That is how this revolution will transform inner work into outer changes, by **recognizing our potential and shutting down our programming.** Picture our beliefs about what makes us who we are as suitcases and backpacks that we take with us everywhere we go. Now imagine that a river nearby floods its banks; the water is rising and soon reaches us. As it climbs ever-higher, up our legs, over our belly, and is approaching our neck, if we continue to grasp our baggage we will surely drown. It will only be by letting go of the images we have, programmed into us by our dominant culture that we will be light enough to float and to engage in the new reality at the peak of the flood. So it is with the many problems flooding our conscious awareness today as we look around at our world. We have to let go of the ideas that got us here: separation, ego, control, property, money, you know many more too. Because our thoughts and emotions are energy, changing our thoughts and releasing, not dwelling, on our emotions affects the world around us. Lose the focus on money and those around feel a lessening of the pressure on them, too. This is how it ripples outward, one consciousness at a time. It is like standing on the edge of a pond, throwing rocks on the water. As more

people join in, the surface reflects a different reality than it did when it had no ripples. Let's throw some rocks!

“Because of all the distractions and trauma in the world these days, it is getting harder and harder to show up for the present moment and engage in our lives. Our kindness and care are on the wane. Our culture tends to lull us into a sense of false security; we think that somehow life is going to get easier. It is like the idea of retirement: we work hard and then there is a lull when we can flop and let everything hang. The path of engagement does not get easier, and there is no retirement. But when we surrender to the reality that we have to keep showing up to make progress; and that being present takes effort, discipline, and dedication, then we discover a sense of delight.”

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

The hard work that needs to be done can be referred to as spiritual. Not to be confused with *religion*, because religion as it exists today is an ossified relic of a time when Men thought the Earth was both flat and the center of the Universe, and that angry spirits caused disease. It will take much effort to overcome and ameliorate this longstanding worldview. Indeed, it will take a revolution in our spirit, as well as our culture.

Please read now Carolyn Baker:

“I believe that as individuals, we must conduct *wars* in our families and communities to radically alter how we live. More importantly, we must engage in the ongoing transformation of our psycho-spiritual awareness so that we are not just giving lip service to our desire to live in a new paradigm, but are actually embracing it and functioning in alignment with it. Curiously, the original meaning of the Islamic term *jihad* was

not a holy war on anything or anyone external, but a holy war on one's own psyche—a conflagration with unconsciousness that resulted in a profound spiritual awakening.

“Likewise, the Shambhala Warrior in the Buddhist tradition *“conquers the world not through violence or aggression, but through gentleness, courage, and self-knowledge. The warrior discovers the basic goodness of human life and radiates that goodness out into the world for the peace and sanity of others.”* In fact, the *holy war* conducted within one's own psyche and a commitment to becoming conscious is the most efficient procedure for eliminating external wars and the illusions of resource and other scarcities that the human ego has contrived.

“A war conducted internally against the residue of the old paradigm, that is, the human shadow in the psyche, is where the most crucial *theater of battle* resides. This can only result in the cultivation of women and men who are authentic spiritual warriors as opposed to trained killers and sycophants of empire.”

I recognize that many people reading this book describe themselves as Christian. More and more, there are also Buddhists, Jews, and Muslims in America, waking up to the need for change. And of course a large contingent of readers see the world through the eyes of science rather than a particular religion. But as long as we allow these views to separate us, we fail to even acknowledge the real fight: what is our spiritual essence and provenance, and how does that inform our path into our future?

There is an interesting story about growing roses. It seems that there is only one type of rose that can grow

well in Florida, due to the chemistry and biota in the soil there. However, one man had exceptional success growing many different roses, and he was asked how he managed to do what no one else could. He answered that it was simple: he used the roots of the sole plant that could handle the soil, and merely grafted the other roses onto the sturdy base. Similarly, it may be very difficult for anyone with a spiritual bent to reach outside their upbringing and traditional faith and receive a lasting and beautiful religious life. Many Americans who were young in the 1960s and 1970s have reached out to Buddhism as a substitute belief system replacing the Christianity they were born into. But merely *cherry-picking* what one likes and leaving out the parts one doesn't may not be conducive to a satisfying and fulfilling spiritual life. What follows is an attempt to reach out to Christians, both current and former, and to show ways by which their root religion can evolve and yet stay true to its core teachings and teacher.

Robin Meyers writes in his book, *"The Underground Church"* about what Christianity might look like if where aligned more with the teachings of Jesus, and less with the 2,000 years of teachings by people who were **interpreting** his words and deeds:

"Instead of passing one more resolution about the importance of feeding the hungry, we can simply resolve to actually feed them – and then resolutely go about doing so. We can refuse to give up on the lost; we can forgive those who have wronged us; we can reject violence in all of its guises. We can refuse to participate in the glamorizing of war and **tell the gospel truth: war is sin.** It is the greatest failure of the human species Baptism once meant a rejection of all violence. What would happen today **if we**

raised more conscientious objectors in our churches than soldiers?

We can boycott products that hurt workers or children or this earthly garden that has been given to us. Those of us who have more than we need will share out of our excess with those who have less than they need. We will not participate in making a scapegoat of our Hispanic brothers and sisters, and we will make arrangements ahead of time to hide an innocent Muslim family should another major terrorist attack occur. **We promise God and one another that we will find ways to withdraw our cooperation from all systems that deal death and diminish dignity.** We will begin by admitting that the most powerful way to get the attention of the Empire is not to fund it. Every time we buy something, we make a statement about what we truly value.”

That sums up this book really well. And yet, despite what you may have experienced in any church in America today, there is nothing in his statement that contradicts the life and teachings of Jesus. What a remarkably different world we would live in, if we were to adopt just these few changes in our way of being!

Many have said that Christianity’s biggest problem is its focus on the death of Jesus at the expense of paying attention to **what he said and did while he was alive.** His life was in many ways more radical than his death; for his time, and for ours. What if we became a nation of Christians (**like Christ**), not Catholics or Lutherans, or Baptists or any of the myriad of ways we self-divide, self-sanction, or self-defeat? And it is also like what was mentioned earlier in the context of climate change. Then I wrote that even if burning fossil fuels and raising the amount of carbon dioxide was not the cause

of climate change, there are still dozens of reasons why burning oil is a bad idea. Here, in this context, releasing people from a requirement that they believe in a resurrection as a litmus test for joining the movement might well free many who do not consider themselves to be *Christian*, to begin to act in openly-Christian ways.

Others have said that Christianity is burdened by the centuries during which it has been shaped and molded to fit the needs of an elite group of leaders, distorting the original message of Jesus. Those first decades following his death, his few followers highly valued their *spiritual experiences*; the early church was deeply rooted in values that arose from the felt self rather than a list of beliefs that could be recited in Sunday School. Taking their cue from how Jesus actually handled his affairs and his movement while he was alive, they also tried to keep their economic lives separate from that of their *rulers*. Again, Robin Meyers points to Scripture in this regard:

“...we often claim to be “a Christian nation”. Obviously we have no idea what was really going on in the early church.

‘Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common... There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned land or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostle’s feet, and it was distributed to each as had need.’

Acts 4:32-35

And here is Phillip Gulley, a Quaker:

“If the church were Christian, Jesus would be a model for living, rather than an object of

worship. **Affirming our potential would be more important than condemning our brokenness.** Reconciliation would be valued over judgment. Gracious behavior would be more important than right belief. Inviting questions would be valued more than supplying answers. Encouraging personal exploration would be more important than communal uniformity. Meeting needs would be more important than maintaining institutions. Peace would be more important than power. We would care more about love and less about sex. This life would be more important than the afterlife.” [emphasis added]

And from “*The Hole in Our Gospel*” by Richard Stearns:

“Christianity is a faith that was meant to spread -- but not through coercion. God’s love was intended to be **demonstrated, not dictated.** When we are living out our faith with integrity and compassion in the world, God can use us to give others a glimpse of His love and character. It is God – not us – who works in the hearts of men and women to forgive and redeem. ...When we become involved in people’s lives, work to build relationships, walk with them through their sorrows and their joys, live with generosity toward others, love and care for them unconditionally, stand up for the defenseless, and pay particular attention to the poorest and most vulnerable, we are showing Christ’s love to those around us, not just talking about it. These are the things that plant the seeds of the gospel in the human heart. Didn’t Jesus care about the whole person – one’s health, family, work, values, relationships, behavior towards others –

and his or her soul? Jesus' view of the world went beyond the bingo transaction; it embraced a revolutionary new view of the world, **an earth transformed by transformed people**, His "disciples of all nations"...."on earth, as it is in heaven"...This gospel – the whole gospel – means much more than the personal salvation of individuals. It means a social revolution."

These writers seem to have one message in common: action is more important than belief. If we believe all are equal, then how can we share resources in such a way as to demonstrate our belief? If we value the message Jesus preached during his lifetime, how can we mirror that in our daily activities?

"Preach the gospel always; when necessary, use words." St. Francis

I've met angels disguised as ordinary people... I'm sure you have, too. What would you do if you met Jesus, or the Buddha, on the street, in your office, at your front door? Would you believe it? Would you know it? Would it change you?

A *soul* knows only dialogue, never monologue. Dialogue points to relationship, not isolation; a joining together of awareness. The monkey mind that chatters endlessly within our known mind, is perpetually in monologue. But peel away the layers of our awareness, and at our core, we are One with all that is. I am part of the same field of energy as you, and that rock, and that salmon. Christian mystic Meister Eckhart wrote: "*The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me; my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love.*" This is the truth that all religions recognize at some level. In the Christian faiths it may be relegated to the small, mystical sects, but it is there. **How can we begin to presence such**

different, profound, and eternal truths in our mundane and ordinary lives?

And what of Buddhism? What is it that attracts the attention of those of us who have been disappointed in the hierarchy or the slow-to-evolve beliefs and practices of the formal, Christian churches? I offer one huge caveat: I do not, and have never, called myself a believer of either of these religions. I turned away from Christianity as soon as I was able to make that decision for myself for two reasons: I cannot come to believe in original sin, and I cannot reconcile the words I hear people say in church on Sunday with the actions I see them performing, or not performing, the rest of the week. I guess maybe I'm just not a big supporter of guilt or hypocrisy. I too, having abandoned the religion of my youth and looked into Buddhism. What follows is my own summary of what I see as the core teachings; and as such, is highly suspect if you are wanting to join this particular faith. But if our goal is to build a spirituality that works, we could do far worse than to use these principles as our foundation.

First, the Buddha lived about 2500 years ago, in India. He did not claim to be a God, nor does he offer any services to communicate between humans and any particular God on our behalf. His focus was on the human experience: explaining why we are here, the reality of our world, and what we can do to evolve our consciousness beyond this world. In particular, he instructed his followers to "Trust, but verify!" He always commanded that we examine what he said in light of our own experience; we are not to take his word or believe something just because he said it. He is noted for explaining the world in a few different ways:

Buddha said, (Anguttara Nikaya 7.64) “A person worthy of respect should have a sense of seven things:

- The dharma and its meaning in general, and in particular, about the concepts of oneself, moderation, the right time and place, social gatherings, how to judge individual people, and knowing what the Buddha did and did not say.
- A sense of meaning: knowing how to explain the dharma’s difficult concepts and ideas.
- A sense of oneself: knowing your true strengths and weaknesses in terms of conviction, virtue, learning, generosity, discernment, and quick-wittedness. You know what to focus on, and can assess objectively where you need more work. [My comment: This requires an *honest* self-assessment, something some of us struggle mightily with!]
- A sense of **enough**; both in terms of basics like food, shelter, clothing, household goods, and money; and also intangibles like desire, effort, concentration, and thinking.
- A sense of time: knowing when to listen, when to memorize, when to ask questions, and when to be alone to practice.
- A sense of social gatherings: knowing how to speak and behave with people of different backgrounds and class.
- A sense of individuals: knowing who to emulate and who is a false role model.

He essentially taught four concepts that explain our world:

- The principle of conditionality: **“If this is, that comes to be; from the arising of this, that arises; if this is not, that does not come to be; from the stopping of this, that is stopped.”** This is commonly referred to as *karma*. Here’s how Pamela Gayle White explains karma:

“On a relative level, as beings subject to confusion or ignorance in varying degrees, we are interdependent, impermanent, and subject to the suffering we seek to avoid, the underlying motor of our experience is karma. Essentially, karma refers to the fact that actions and thoughts have results; nothing exists without a cause. This is both bad news and good news.

“It’s bad news if we continue to remain in *head in the sand* mode, because our tendency will be to relate happiness and pleasure or frustration and dissatisfaction as having external sources and external solutions. We deal with them by focusing on a prize or a culprit and reacting according to our confused patterns: we turn on the charm, or scheme, or run away, or fight... the experience of pain or pleasure is mainly a state of mind. Whether we experience the world as enlightened or confused depends upon our state of mind.

“And that’s the good news.

“It’s good news because there is always the potential for being truly aware of

what's going on and using that to deepen our understanding. There is always the potential for opening our eyes and **being Buddha**: awake. Furthermore, interdependence means that good actions bring positive, happy results for us and for others; and impermanence means that painful situations can change for the better and that we can perceive them differently and use them more wisely...

“The basic meditation called *shamatha*, or *calm abiding*, is a neutral process of **acknowledging and letting go**. We're willing to cut through our attachments to thought -- but we are not trying to stop the process of thinking, because thoughts are not the problem. Our hopes and fears, attachment and rejection, the tension they create and veils they reinforce are the problem.”

- The Four Noble Truths:
 1. The truth of suffering (In the Pali language: *dukkha*) This means that **everything** is temporary, including something as wonderful and precious as our *souls*. Eventually we lose everything, good and bad. We suffer when we are attached: to material possessions, people, ideas and attitudes and beliefs, and then lose them. Here is Sue Johnson, writing about attachment: “*Freud was wrong. Sex and aggression are not our strongest instincts; attachment is. If you show people a safe route to connection, they will always take it.*” If I can be open to saying, “*I feel mad, but mainly I feel lonely*”

*and scared, and I want you to comfort me; I don't know how to ask for this and so I yell at you"; this could change everything. **You might even comfort me**, building our own emotional bond even more.*

2. The truth of the cause of suffering (*samudaya*) The cause of suffering is **craving** or thirst (*tanha*). We continually search for something outside ourselves to make us happy. But no matter how successful we are, we can never remain satisfied. We fear losing what we have and never getting it back, we fear we will never get what we crave so much, and we fear that what we already have and hate won't ever go away. We forget the mantra: pain is mandatory; suffering is optional.
3. The truth of the end of suffering (*nirhodha*) Through diligent practice, we can end craving. Although this seems to point to the future, it is helpful to understand that this Noble Truth also points out to us that peace is available; right here, in this moment, in **your** heart, no matter your, or our, circumstances. Neither money nor relationships control you and force you into a particular state of being!
4. The truth of the path that frees us from suffering (*magga*) The emphasis here is on **living the doctrine and walking the path**. Buddha left instructions for this process by describing *The Eightfold Path*:
 1. Right View
 2. Right Intention
 3. Right Speech
 4. Right Action

5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

- The practice of mindful awareness: Enlightenment (bodhi) is a state of being in which greed, hatred and delusion (*moha*) have been overcome, abandoned and are absent from the mind. Mindfulness, which, among other things, is an attentive awareness of the reality of things, especially of the present moment, is an antidote to delusion
- The Five Precepts: Similar to the Christian Ten Commandments, the Five Precepts prohibit, 1) killing, 2) stealing, 3) lying, 4) sexual misconduct, and 5) ingesting intoxicants. Please note however: these are taught more as guidelines and less as inviolable laws. A person traveling the Eightfold Path uses those skills and makes wise decisions; there may be situations when the right course of action would violate a precept. A person taking that action would then not be subject to the kind of *eternal damnation* that someone violating a Commandment might face, because it is appropriate for the situation.

The core practice of Christianity is prayer; the core of Buddhist practice is meditation. Many people think of prayer as a way to ask God for something: pray for healing, pray for a raise at work, pray for a great vacation. But a deep, contemplative prayer practice is different; it opens my heart to hear the small voice of God guiding me through this life. Meditation is similar; it is less about the common perception of *sit there and don't think* and more about developing skills that will help us move through our world. Modern life is not

about finding the correct tool outside ourselves that will *fix* our life. In other words, as distractions and pressures mount, we become ever less able to focus on the truly important aspects of our lives that are long-term by their very nature. We are being trained by our culture to think in 140-character memes, to abbreviate common sayings in lieu of actually expressing a deep thought, and to turn to some other form of sensory input (checking email or Facebook in the middle of a conversation with a friend) when what's actually going on around us is *boring* us. Think of adding a room onto your house as an instructive analogy. The easily distracted and constantly overwhelmed person is unable to focus long enough to finish all the steps it takes; many today are unable to pay attention to one task long enough to get past just the design and permit stage. In a similar fashion, the person who indulges in continual instant-gratification consumption or impulse buying will never be able to save enough capital to exit wage/debt serfdom. This same mechanism sabotages long-term projects such as losing weight, improving diet, or meditating. In this way, the tools that are sold as improving our productivity, connectivity, and knowledge actually undermine our ability to function effectively and competently in the larger narratives and contexts of our lives. Prayer or meditation, used to teach us how to focus our attention, is a fundamental skill that improves our life experience.

In essence, meditation is not about sitting without a thought in my head; rather it is about noticing thoughts as what they truly are: distractions. Focusing my attention as fully as possible on my breath, my mind will eventually wander. I notice that it is planning tomorrow, or worrying about a meeting this afternoon, or rethinking that conversation last night with my son that went so badly, and gently releasing the thought and

returning my attention to my breath. No self-castigation for having a thought, just a recognition that thought is changing my perception of my world and **right now** I want to ***be*** with the world just as it is and so I let go of the thought. By noticing, I can develop skills of relating with the world through my thoughts, emotions, and feelings without being controlled by them. Pema Chödrön points out these skills that arise from a regular meditation practice:

- **Clear seeing** When we develop a skill of seeing our thoughts as they operate, catching us into a web of emotion and spinning us into actions that are, shall we say, not very productive, then we begin to experience the world as it is and not as we wish it to be, or as our ego or our emotions pretend that it is. Our thoughts come, our emotions come, and we can see them for what they are: stories we tell ourselves as we try to make meaning from our world. Inevitably, our stories are limiting our chances to connect with others with love and compassion, and thus stepping out of our stories and clearly seeing what is present in this moment, we can discern the skillful action (if any!) we wish to take.
- **Courage** Being able to witness our thoughts, emotions, and feelings with clarity and without telling a story to justify or accept them takes courage. It is difficult, and without practice impossible, to separate the story from reality and to experience our interior world without getting caught into suffering. Pain is mandatory: that is what inevitably arises within our hearts as we travel through this life. But suffering, holding onto a story that makes us a victim, or that justifies being cruel to others and thus spreading

the pain away from our own awareness; **suffering is optional**. If I look back on my life and see how failure and the pain it leaves behind has served as my teacher, then when suffering arises it becomes just my signal to pay attention and learn something. Accepting what is arising and letting it show us something and then move on takes courage.

- **Attention** The essence of meditation, attention is what brings our awareness to this moment... and this one... and this one. We learn to just **be**. Life is not predictable. My ego wants to keep me safe, and it does this by worrying and remembering and constructing a story that explains what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen. We fall into ruts: habitually acting and reacting without actually thinking about what we are doing and the resulting impact on our lives and on those around us. Unexpected events send us spinning into fear and confusion and inappropriate reactions. Attention is a skill that allows us to observe what thoughts, emotions, and feelings we are experiencing without attachment to them as being the truth of the moment. We can sort through what is going on and choose the lessons to learn, choose how we will react this time, choose what is important instead of merely reacting unconsciously. It allows us not only to accept the present moment with all of its challenges, but also to accept stepping into unknown territory, secure in the knowledge that whatever unexpected arising we encounter there, **we will be okay**. It is the powerful place where we can truly open our heart and mind without

fear, and that is a wonderful space where we can play!

- **No big deal** Something happens, and we get excited. We think we are special, or entitled. But really, it is no big deal. In the grand scheme of our Universe, can anything be said to be a big deal, a game-changer? Thinking that way leads to arrogance or pride, and as Buddha teaches us, that big deal won't last forever. Then what? And if on the other hand, our life spirals out of control and we think it is a big deal, then that way leads to self-denigration or an impoverished spirit. We also, in that dark and uncomfortable space, forget that this too will change. Then what?

Putting all of these bits together, here is what Buddhism tells us: if we peel away all the various layers of our consciousness we eventually reach our core our essence, and we find that underlying our awareness is the tiniest bit of the perfect, eternal, Universal energy field. Buddhists call this unchanging wakefulness *buddhanature*. It is in us every moment because it is impossible to exist without it. Buddhists describe buddhanature as having, among others, these qualities:

- Like the Sun, our buddhanature always shines, even when clouds temporarily hide it. It is always there; we are always *being* however we are even as we are Buddhas in our heart-of-hearts.
- Like the lotus, a flower that grows from mud, our buddhanature is unsullied by the mud of our own passions, aggressions, and ignorances.
- Like gold, we need only purify the dross of our obscurations in order to experience the brilliance and beauty of our buddhanature.

What does all of this information look like in our daily lives? How might we benefit, even if we don't sign up as Buddhists, by using this information to inform our actions? Think about something that troubles us all: anger. To paraphrase the Dalai Lama when he was asked if he ever got angry, he answered, *"Of course! Things happen that aren't what you wanted. Anger arises. But it doesn't have to be a problem!"* Anger is a normal human reaction that blurs our ability to see widely or clearly. Our focus narrows into a tiny point of emotion, and we are blind to other possible interpretations of what just happened, and unable to see alternative ways to handle the problems that have arisen. Wisdom guides us to let go of the anger once we have acknowledged it, and to let clarity and kindness guide our response, not our anger. Rarely, if ever, do our angry responses turn out better than our compassionate ones! The key to understanding and being peaceful in this way ties back to the first Noble Truth: everything changes. In a well-used Christian phrase, *"this too shall pass"*. The secular trick of *"counting to ten"* accomplishes this without explaining how: by letting the tsunami of anger pass by, our focus and attention can once again widen to see more possibilities and more ways to be kind and generous in our response. As human beings, let us recognize that we can **observe** our initial inclinations and **rest** in our inherent, calm state of being until we are clear on the action that will be harmless or even helpful, and in our best long-term interest.

Ultimately, we bring our experience of Spirit into our daily lives by living our understanding in every moment. We don't have to go to church to experience the Christ; Christ lives in our hearts every moment and is available to guide us and give us strength now, as we need it. We don't only see our buddhanature while sitting on a cushion in meditation; we can experience each moment

from within our enlightened heart. Being mindful and awake is just like breathing: it is nice that it often happens without our having to think about it. When we show up, life unfolds before us like a beautiful flower. Tenderness for all living things begins to appear. Without labels of *good* or *bad* our heart opens and our world shines. Love doesn't try for a particular outcome because it just is what it is. It doesn't *need* something in return. We just have to show up and let love and Spirit show us this moment. It's easy!

Although I have presented some of the basics of the Buddhist beliefs system for your understanding, there are many aspects that we can pull from those beliefs that will help us in our day-to-day lives without being attached to a *religion*. These concepts include generosity, mindfulness, integrity, patience, and gratitude. Don Miguel Ruiz uses his book "*The Five Agreements*" to describe five ways we can be more present and less attached:

1. **Be impeccable with your word.** Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Avoid using words to speak against yourself or to gossip about others.
2. **Don't take anything personally.** What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.
3. **Don't make assumptions.** Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstanding, sadness, and

drama⁶⁶. With just this one agreement you can completely transform your life.

4. **Always do your best.** Your best is going to change from moment to moment. It will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance simply do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.

5. **Be skeptical, but learn to listen.** We don't have to believe every message we hear; we don't put our faith in lies. When our faith is not in lies, we quickly move beyond emotional drama, victimization and the limiting belief systems our *domestication* has programmed us with.

I confess to being ignorant about other religions. Besides the two mentioned already, indigenous cultures have their own spiritual traditions, and the Islamic and Hindu religions each claim more believers than Buddhism. I won't get into details about any of these others; but I do want to quote an article written by Krista Bremer titled "*Face to the Floor*", about her experience converting to Islam after being born into a Christian family, exploring Buddhism, and then marrying a Muslim. She writes:

"The first time I saw my husband put his forehead to the ground in prayer, through a crack in his bedroom door, I was as disturbed as if I'd caught him piercing a voodoo doll with a needle.

⁶⁶ By only using *I* statements, never *you*, we own our reactions to what happened, and avoid needing to deal with the defensive walls others raise the instant they have been blamed for causing the problem. For more on this concept, look into Nonviolent Communication (NVC) created by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg.

What kind of god, I wondered, would want us in such a compromised position? But worship is Islam's fundamental practice; Muslims cultivate a direct relationship with God through their five daily prayers...

...With the help of a free download I turned toward the Kaaba, Islam's holiest site, which Muslims everywhere face to pray. I stood noble and tall, as God's representative on earth, then bowed at the waist, then folded all the way down to the ground like the lowliest of servants. My body strained **to embody nobility and servitude, strength and powerlessness.** That repeated up-and-down movement dislodged something deep inside. The weight of my forehead against the floor broke apart what I'd spent a lifetime trying to protect: my fragile individualism and brittle self-determination. With my face to the floor, an oppressive weight rolled off my shoulders: **the burdensome arrogance and guilt that came from believing I was the master of my life,** the sole source of its brokenness and beauty. I began to weep for all I did not understand and could not control."

In just these two paragraphs, she has touched the fundamental aspect I want to convey with this section on Spirit and Revolution: when we experience the dysfunction of our isolation, and the bliss of our true connection with Spirit, our heart opens in ways that are needed **right now** to heal our planet and our civilization. **This is the real work that will engender revolution;** and it is sorely missing from most of what passes for religion today. It matters not the path we use to find it: all paths lead to this awareness once we *grok* reality. What is important is to seek the

experiences that will balance our body, mind, emotions, and spirit; our heart will lead us from there.

Religion today distrusts science and mystical experience, both. The religious conversation can never be between *just me and God*; there must always be the church, or its representative priests, pastors, or preachers, in between God and I, dictating what can and cannot be said. Within these dictates, where is reverence for all life? Unless we experience acting humanely, how can we recover what it is to be human? We struggle to act humanely towards just humans; is it possible that we can also learn to extend our humane actions to our entire planet? Religion fails precisely because you have to be human and believe in order to not be an *animal* or a *heathen*. Anytime someone says, “*I believe*”, we have to wonder if they really mean, “*I don’t know, I haven’t experienced it*”. Does that affect how willing we should be to follow their lead? The church turning away from what is real has even gone so far in America that Christian groups in Kansas have gone to court to try to stop the schools from teaching science at all grade levels, because faith-based creationism is not being included in the curriculum, and they insist that learning about science will create “*a hostile learning environment for those of faith.*” How can we encourage everyone to find a path that includes, rather than excludes?

Our known self is also loath to acknowledge that becoming aware of our *beingness* can be beneficial. But an impressive body of research has shown that violence and conflict in society can be reduced by meditation⁶⁷, more awareness, and more God. It’s hard

⁶⁷ Basic meditation instructions: Focus on your breath. If you breathe unconsciously you are disconnected from the world and the present moment. Don’t *think* that you have to

for western minds to grasp that at the most fundamental level, peace is not a matter of laws that ban guns but of our awareness. We continue to flail about, demanding gun laws and military intervention to protect us from a few people within our own community. We don't connect our own chaotic interiors with the chaos we witness in the streets near our home or on streets around the world. We are **entangled** with one another. How can we begin to manifest that understanding in ways that bring us peace and justice?

Placebo effect, where a sugar pill works as well or better than a chemical *medication*, is how story changes our bodies; it shows that we aren't **just** the sum of what we eat, drink, and breathe. And what helps us more than any chemical? Compassion and care. We work best together, not in isolation. You can't dissect a human brain and know everything about it works, because it works best in connection with others and with the environment. It is a radio receiver, tapping the energies around it. It gains power and understanding when linked with others at similar wavelengths: group mind. Mirror neurons allow me to resonate with you, your emotions, even your physical sensations; you can become an extension of my own body. But like any process or system or knowledge; if you don't use it, you lose it. Our isolation has created a problem worse than obesity, depression, or lack: it has led to our turning our backs on the **reality** of the milieu in which we live, and the many ways it feeds us in every moment. Food is not our only source of energy, our five senses are not our

suppress thoughts; as you notice any thought, let it go and return your attention to your breath. In and out; feelings both physical and emotional, and **breathing together with the whole world**. Focus on breathing with your feet in order to include your whole being in your breath.

only ways of knowing. Embodied cognition: we think and know with our bodies, and not just our own, but with the bodies of others around us. Your stomach actually thinks. Our ego, encapsulated just above our sinuses, tells us that we are in control. Yet our body does what it will, regardless of our ego's intentions. How many times have you been swept up in an emotion: rage, or fear, or jealousy for instance; and found yourself **unable to stop doing something that you know is hurtful or uncaring**? Was it your ego or your body that was in control in that moment? We use meditation to help us learn to stop in the moment, to allow what is to be what it is without struggle or judgment, which is just another way of saying we cannot control our emotions but we can prevent them from controlling how we react when they pop up.

Perhaps environmental pollution and the painful gap between rich and poor do not constitute the major challenges of our time. Perhaps the real challenge is in how we meet the world; that is in how our consciousness plays a role in forming what we perceive and what we believe. Consciousness is what we claim makes us unique in evolution; but we have yet to fully understand it or all of its implications and possibilities. We live in a world where the march of material development has proceeded far faster than advances in our understanding of consciousness. Our internal worlds have not evolved as quickly as our ability to manipulate the material one. Take for example what happened on 9/11/2001: Random number generators were already being studied to see if collective consciousness could affect their output. For over two days following the collapse of the WTC Towers, the generators' outputs radically changed and remained constant in this new, more coherent state. Similar effects have been noted following the death of Princess Diana and the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia;

both were events that tapped a worldwide pool of compassion and grief. Is it possible that there truly can be great *disturbances in the Force* that aware souls can feel?

Or look at the studies done in the Middle East in the 1980's: seven different experiments focusing (although not entirely) upon Israel and Lebanon, showed correlations between the numbers of meditators who would focus on the idea of peace and the concurrent levels of conflict in the nearby communities. Rates of death often fell 75% while the meditators were at work. And the results weren't only confined to the wars going on at the time; crime, car accidents, and fires also declined in frequency. Yet if you are like most people, you read these words and quickly discount the research as crackpot. The "*Journal of Conflict Resolution*", which published the study, went so far in the prelude to comment, "*Yet the hypothesis seems logically derived from the initial premises and its empirical testing seems competently executed.*" When can we begin to embrace groundbreaking ideas and find breakthrough solutions that will evolve our consciousness and thus our world? Each of us has the opportunity to affect the collective consciousness; we lift up our neighbors as we rise in our own awareness. Former particle physicist John Hagelin writes, "*A universal principle in Nature is that internally coherent systems possess the ability to dispel disruptive external influences, while incoherent systems are easily penetrated by disorder from outside.*" Our minds, our interior worlds, are more important than any external tool. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, "*There's nothing wrong with materialism. We just have to realize that matter is 100% an expression of mind, of consciousness.*"

Rupert Sheldrake has shown that if a group of people complete a newly created crossword puzzle, which is

later sent to a second group of people, the second group completes it much faster than the first group. How can we explain this documented, repeatable finding? What new way of living do they point to? Would it be possible to learn how our brains truly work; to direct our internal lives more consciously, rather than leave it up to random chance, or the domination of external forces, events, or people? Might we free ourselves of the paradigms that have dominated the last 5,000 years: humanity dominating Nature, man dominating woman, rich dominating poor? You and I live within a complex web of energy interactions; at the most basic, everything is energy. If I believe that my survival lies in the system I identify as *me* ruthlessly out-competing the system I have identified as *you*, I risk damaging the entirety that sustains us both. Besides, is it dominating that truly gives me pleasure? Don't I find that even when I am on top, I spend most of my time worrying that someone will turn the tables, take advantage of my weaknesses, and *win* our competition? I feel the most at peace when I am giving, helping, serving, without concern of being exploited in service of some ulterior motive of control. The true measure of my development is my willingness to give. And in many ways, those among us with the least in the way of material wealth or possessions, seem to be the most willing to give of what little they do have. Perhaps they understand better than we, how little happiness we derive from stuff.

Holding a belief in *God* often means placing responsibility for any outcome onto some idol outside ourselves to which we worship, pray, obey, and view from afar. We tend to worship the god of our imagination, not the God **beyond** our imagination. Having a God that is outside us absolves us from having to seek God inside, and to see God in everything that surrounds us. How completely do we absolve ourselves?

Every idea of *ours*, every 100% *truth*, and each time we think of ourselves as a separate, isolated consciousness we reinforce this absolutism of relationship and connection with what can only be thought of as our *family*: the life that surrounds us and is us. Even the thought of a *God* is a concept that has no basis in reality; rather, All Is.

Setting a goal that I *should* attain leaves me judging and becoming a tyrant setting a target, or an actor *doing* the work, rather than allowing my awareness to settle in being that allows relationships to determine the path of this moment. Evolution has brought us to this point in time. We are the perfect result, given what it took to get us here. The next moment, and the next after that, bring their own perfection. To fixate on any idea as 100% truth is to miss the point that everything changes. To fixate on control is to miss the larger point that gold, and roses, and salmon have as much *right* to exist as human beings. We can only survive by being in peace with what is, not by build an empire based on waste and destruction.

According to our modern paradigm of reality, there is only what science tells us is *true*. Everything can be explained using physics, supposedly. That means there can be no such thing as mystery, because we trust that ultimately, science will be able to explain everything, once we know. And when mystery is killed off, its relatives: experiences like awe, wonder, sanctity, sacredness, the numinous, they will all shrivel and die, too. So, that reality *out there*, and this reality *in here*, is all meaning-less: scientific reality only has meaning if we impose some wishful, magical, subjective thinking onto the cut-and-dried and rational physics, which, as believers in objective science, we are not allowed to do. And that reality *out there* is just *stuff*, and it interacts with this reality *in here*, in our brain,

which again is just *stuff*. Nowhere in the depiction and analysis of scientific reality (the known world) is there anywhere for a happy, healthy, and complete human being. Isn't it sick and bizarre that human beings have come up with a teaching that describes the totality of the Universe which does not even include the organism that we are, at all? The Christian Fundamentalists may be completely round the bend when it comes to logic but maybe they just feel intuitively that what they are being offered by the people who argue against them is an unbelievable worldview: a so-called *cosmology* which says that nothing means anything; a place where a happy, healthy, biological human being can delude herself into thinking she is in control and that she understands (and deems acceptable) all the consequences of her actions; a world that is only sterile and divisible and *scientific*. These notions are so far from our actual experience that many of us intuitively reject them and some are even hostile to them.

2000BC: Here: eat this root.

1000AD: That root is heathen, here: say this prayer.

1850AD: That prayer is heathen, here: drink this potion.

1940AD: That potion is snake oil, here: take this antibiotic.

1985AD: That pill is ineffective, here: take this anti-viral.

1997AD: That anti-viral is a GMO⁶⁸, here: take this root.

⁶⁸ Genetically Modified Organism

As we look back on our history, not just of humans but of the entire Universe, we still don't completely understand evolution; our science is far from complete. Earth itself has only existed less than 5 of the 13.7 billion years since the start of it all; Mankind for a mere blink of an eye. Life is unbelievably awe-inspiring when you stop and think about it: it arose in millions of varied types and manners in countless different ecosystems, all from just a handful of organic compounds. Evolution points to change, to growth, to the continuum whereby new and creative ideas become manifest. Eyes evolved separately from crude sensing organs at least five times; I guess that means eyes are a good idea. Evolution results when crisis forces life to seek new possibilities. Our concepts of evolution have moved far beyond Darwin's *natural selection*, or that the nucleus is the "brain" of any cell, which is what I was taught in school. Our understanding of DNA, the legacy of billions of years of evolution in all life, is itself evolving. For instance, we still don't understand how we can be only 300 genes (out of 21,000) apart from mice and yet still be so different. Some scientists even question the part of evolution that claims that once there have been enough mutations, an entirely new species results in a process called *speciation*: these human bodies that we wear today have changed little, either in physical terms or in brain size, for 200,000 years. Many of the ways we define ourselves as *human*: using tools, speaking languages, burying our dead, creating art, playing games, crafting musical instruments, adorning our bodies with objects and art, and possessing self-awareness; all of these traits have existed for nearly 50,000 years, and most have been demonstrated among species of life that are not human, including self-awareness. We used to think that *homo sapiens* was just the step after Neanderthal; now we know from DNA that

we are on different branches of the Tree of Life, and we have trouble actually pointing to any species that might have preceded us. In fact, some scientists worry because they are unable to point to **any** new species that are a result of gradual evolutionary changes. I wonder which *belief system* will turn out to be right?

We even believe that our bodies are only that: the cells that make up a human body. Science tells us now, however, that our bodies are host to trillions of bacteria and viruses, beneficial or neutral to our existence for the most part; living, functioning, and dying over a period that in most cases lasts but weeks. This “skin encapsulated ego” that we identify as our separate self is a community of nearly 50 **trillion** cells. There are about 2.5 million unseen (and mostly harmless) bacteria cells in a cubic yard of air; think about that the next time you take a deep breath. Genes, our genetic code that for decades appeared to be our destiny written in concrete, are a prime feature of the nucleus of our cells. Bruce Lipton postulates, based on decades-old research, that genes and DNA are more like blueprints: a plan of possibility, awaiting the firm hand of a builder to construct the foundation inherent in that design. By placing stem cells from a single donor, identical in every way, into different environments, he was able to see the DNA in those cells express itself in radically different ways. One batch became stomach cells, one batch heart cells, and one batch cartilage. So genes are just a blueprint, placed in the nucleus for reproduction, not for directing the cell in its activities. The theory that the environment affects how genes express themselves is called **epigenetics**, the prefix ‘epi-’ meaning ‘above’. Believing that genes or DNA determine your future sets you firmly on the road to victimhood. Believing that epigenetics allows for adaptation in real time grants one mastery. The primary reason epigenetics shifts our

thinking about heredity is that changes in the Mother's genes' **expression** can be passed along to her children, creating **pre-polluted** offspring. The rate of cancer in children under the age of 6 has increased 27% in the last ten years. What could cause that much of an increase in a disease that we would expect should be rare in someone so young? And the rates of autism, using the same guide for diagnosis, are 1 in 69 births in Minnesota, and yet 1 in 718 next door in Iowa. This argues strongly for localized exposure to some chemical or other agent, arguably occurring during the Mother's pregnancy at a crucial stage of the baby's development and not after birth. Has our inability to properly test and regulate the use of tens of thousands of chemicals, and their associated interactions with each other, begun to have damaging effects upon us?

What controls or directs the cell is the **membrane**, a collection of proteins that sense the exterior environment surrounding the cell, and causing a chemical reaction inside the cell as a reaction to what is known about, or taken in from, the outside. By expanding the ability of a cell to sense or react, you add new possibilities; possibilities that, when acted upon, bring about something entirely new, or what might be called evolution. The cell's wall is truly the brain of the operation, in other words, not the DNA. Our lesson in this is to expand our ability to sense, to get out of our heads and out of our ruts, to push the boundaries of what is *safe* and get beyond our comfort zone and into our stretch zone.

What does this tell us about the evolution of our human species? It means understanding that we are truly not alone, separate islands amidst the sea of humanity. The evolutionary aspect calls us to tap into

and develop our group mind. Religion tells us that Man was added to an already-complete Earth, not that all Life is continuously evolving. The butterfly meandering outside your window is the result of the same 13.7 billion years of change in the Universe, and has as much right to be here as you or I. If 50 trillion cells can come together and put men on the Moon, what can 7 billion times 50 trillion accomplish? Nature seeks community, balance, and harmony, not isolation, extremes, and discord. Of course, we see examples of all of these conditions, but the trend is towards greater function and complexity. Does my arm fear my leg? Can we step up to the next level and ask, “*Where does the **human super-organism** fit in?*” Crisis drives a species into new possibilities, forcing choices that expand comfort zones and open new vistas for development. What will we create as we evolve past today’s many crises?

Our disconnection from Nature is acute: children often spend their entire lives within manmade habitats and environments, never venturing outside other than to play at school recess on asphalt or concrete. Fearful of child abduction, parents rarely let children outside unattended, unlike when my generation was growing up. This isolation is destructive: it prevents us from understanding the true nature of *extinction*. We fail to grasp the finality of it all: species that die out can continue to exist in a book, which is likely the only place I have encountered them anyway. It is much less personal when I have never had a relationship with an animal, when it comes time to reconcile the end of the line for a particular species. It is arrogance to ignore that our own drive to reproduce our species is not also apparent in every other lineage around us. It is ignorant to think that extinction is harmless, or that by decreasing the possibilities for evolution, there is nothing to worry about.

Bruce Lipton also points out that perception *controls* behavior, and because behavior affects which environment we inhabit, perception also *controls* the expression of our genes. You might say, because perception *rewrites* behavior, it also *rewrites* genes. And since beliefs **precede** perception; beliefs instruct our subconscious what details of the world we inhabit to bring to our attention, thus **beliefs control behavior**. Now before you get off into the so-called *prosperity gospel*, or the world as imagined in “*The Secret*” where merely envisioning that sports car in the driveway is enough to *magnetize* it into your possession, realize this: there is precious little belief left these days. The 10% of our mind that is actually conscious doesn’t really believe anything; it has seen beliefs proven wrong too many times. What we have instead are superstitions, fantasies, memorization, and insecurities that make us allow the demands of others override our common sense. And if you have trouble understanding the point that our subconscious mind only allows our conscious mind to see a portion of the world around us, note this please:

Wilderness tracker Tom Brown Jr. tells a story in one of his books about a group of students who were learning plant identification, and were out with Brown on a herb walk. Brown stopped them at one point along the trail, pointed to a plant, and said, “*What do you see?*” The students all correctly named the plant. “*Get closer and take another look,*” Brown said. The students did so, and confirmed that it was, in fact, the plant they’d named. After several repetitions, they were almost on top of the plant, and it wasn’t until then that the rabbit that was nibbling on the plant leaves bounded away, startling the students. They had been paying so much

attention to [trying to identify] plants that they hadn't seen the rabbit at all.

Once beliefs are accepted, they can't be reasoned away: "my mind is *made up*". Again, we cannot see what our worldview won't allow, won't accept, or doesn't even acknowledge. And since 90% of our awareness is unconscious, even *believing* with my conscious mind that I deserve a Ferrari in the driveway won't make it happen unless my unconscious is in agreement; and if it is, then the Ferrari would already be there!

The modern world doesn't tell us much about the indigenous people who still practice, as much as they can, the old, Primal ways. Because that view is so different from the known self, it is a threat to the logical, rational, *just the facts* approach we rely upon in our high tech world. But Shamanism survives today because having respect for life in all forms and an ability to see truth in the world, **works**. When you have that respect, and you know the truth, you cannot turn your back on your world. It is not like taking a job, being a shaman; it is a commitment to acting from your knowledge of what is right and what is wrong about the energy of this moment. It is about helping others through these rough patches. Once a shaman is identified, his life is no longer his own: "*You belong to the community and you're expected to use your talent to help those who need it. You never turn anyone away.*" So says Brant Secunda, a shaman in our modern world. This is a lesson we would do well to consider, now that we know the known self is leading us into so much trouble.

It is the modern fantasy that we are *special*; that we are better than, and able to live separately from, Nature. We seek that which will proclaim our transcendence above the ordinary for all to see: the \$6,000 watch, the 4,500 square foot house, the \$100,000 car, all material

possessions that scream, “*I am special, unique, gifted, better than you.*” Instead, maybe we need to see that *ordinary* is enough. Today our culture tells us that ordinary means inadequate or irrelevant; it says we must be extraordinary to be relevant, or so we *think*. Ordinary fits seamlessly into the world without a need to stand out. Thich Nhat Hahn writes of performing the ordinary action of washing a teapot “**with the kind of attention I would have if I were giving the baby Buddha or baby Jesus a bath**”. Ordinary. Feel how it grates to think of being ordinary; that is your conditioning at work. We are all ordinary, like trees or rocks or rabbits are ordinary. We all, up to and including our planet itself, are made of stardust that formed billions of years ago in the bellies of Suns, most of which are long gone now. Science tells us that energy cannot be destroyed, it can only change form. In this book, I make the point that consciousness is the same: being an inherent aspect of the foundational energy that underlies the Universe, it can’t be created or destroyed, but it can change its form. We don’t sense energy as it truly is; we sense energy based on **how we are being** in that moment. Picture any situation and your description will be different from mine: men sense things differently than women, children sense differently than adults, mosquitos sense differently than dogs, rocks sense differently than water.

As much as we have been programmed to try to be special, when we leave ordinary behind we lose touch with what is *real* and we go mad. How can we remember to celebrate the ordinary in our lives? Ponder this for a moment: Ordinary. How much more ordinary can we be? We arise using the same elements that came from the deep interiors of the early stars as every bit of Earth. And when our time has passed, we return those elements to the Earth. **Just like every other bit of**

life or thing on this planet. We are connected, by our Source. We are kin of every life on Earth, for we all share the same Source. There is no *I believe*, no pride, no judgment, and no room for self-doubt. Don't enable the lie that this culture tells us: that we are separate and alone. This world has grown more brutal: look at the occupation of Alcatraz and compare it to the Occupy encampments and note how the police responded; it was far more brutal, and yet the brutality was un-remarkable. Compare the side-effects of alcohol and its problems with those of meth today. The effects of methamphetamines on human bodies are much more severe, quick, and brutal. We see that just as some aspects of life have become easier or softer, others have intensified and become harsher. Everything is balanced, after all. Revolution means to return back to where we came from; if that means to the attitudes that are the foundation of a Primal world, then **revolution is exactly what we need!** There is duality in this world; in everything we perceive, think, say, do, and feel. We are both awakened and confused.

Another aspect of duality is this: there are far enemies and near enemies. If we are practicing compassion, for example; the far enemy might be cruelty. It is pretty clear to all who are looking that a cruel action is far from compassionate. But we can easily fall prey to the near enemy; in compassionate work, we might manifest from a sense of pity, a sense of *helping a victim*. That would not be compassion, instead that might be seeing someone as poor, a broken victim, someone unable to help themselves. Another near enemy of compassion might be acting with a sense of a necessary outcome. We might want to cause others to think like us or want them to think we are great, enlightened beings. We might try to calm an aggressive, scary situation, expecting that our energy will calm others and relieve us all of our fear.

These might slip past our ego and be labeled as *compassion* when actually they are not. They are full of judgment: judgment of the needs and abilities of others, or judgment of the outcome as being *good* or *bad*. The near enemy is all about avoiding dealing with what is real and true; but true spiritual practice, true growth and evolution of consciousness, is based in not avoiding **anything**.

Nature uses crisis to drive evolution: why are we worried that crisis seems so close? Remember, it is the mystics, the *crazy* people, the prophets, that lead the way. It is not that we need to arrive at a point of view where everything is sunsets and flowers; it is more that we act on what we feel in this moment, be that feeling the joy of giving, or be it the melancholy as we remember lost love, or an excitement as we express our creativity, or maybe boredom while standing in line. It is about what we *are* in each moment, and how we connect with what is in our heart all the while that matters and makes this life one we can cherish. When we lessen our separation, we also begin to blend our physical manifestation with our inner spiritual world; and miracles begin to happen. A miracle is when something happens that was impossible in the old story, and it says to you loudly and clearly: *“Your world is too small, your sense of what is possible is too narrow. Open to possibility; let *me* show you something that you don’t dare think yourself.”* A miracle is when the light shines through the cracks of the shell that forms what you think is your world; it is a sign that the world you *think* you *know* is about to fall apart. Making miracles is a totally different world view: are you ready to walk away from the life and the expectations and the dreams that you’ve held all these years? Enlightenment, and the ability to make miracles at will, is not about total, eternal bliss. It is about seeing reality for what it is,

and that is not about plastic consumption and moving from one distraction to the next. What does it mean when the life of a particular person who is awake to their consciousness (Dr. King, Michael Hastings, Jesus) needs to be ended because of where their path is headed? Who gets to decide that?

Why do we spend so many resources to explore the origin of our Universe? Because our *root* is important: our biggest questions are, “*Who am I?*” and “*Why am I here?*” Today, our science is teaching us that **everything** is energy. The ultimate source of the energy underlies all; we are but observers of that small portion that refracts into our awareness. As a prism breaks white light into many colors, some we like and some we don’t, so reality breaks out into parts, some we like and some we don’t. Phenomena do not exist in their own right, writes the Dalai Lama, but rather only have existence dependent upon many factors, **including a consciousness that conceptualizes them**. Think of a movie screen: when the light plays on the screen, we enjoy a story. When the light goes away, what is left is the same screen as before, we just experience it differently. How are you experiencing this one wild and precious life? What is your most heartfelt wish? For many people it is simply this: I wish to be wiser, kinder, and more loving. Other concepts might include being more skillful, virtuous, awake, and full of life. Are these qualities present in someone who is enlightened? Holy? Or just a human being? When we lose sight of our heart’s wish, we look outside ourselves and stop being and start doing. We seek solace for our loss in acquiring things and power over others. Society tells us we are inherently *bad*; and we forget who we are. And then we end up in a situation like we see around us today. How can we recapture the world we know is possible?

When we create God in our mind, or in our image, then in that God we recreate our own fears, violence, and tendency to go to war to get what we want. Better to open to what God intends for us, without attaching our own so-called needs or desires. Pray for understanding, not particular outcomes. Pray for guidance, not a larger house. Pray for strength, not more digits in your bank account. Enlightenment is accepting that what we see or feel around us, happening to us or inside us, is what it is because this moment has evolved to be felt in this way. In other words, if we always set our own goals, rather than be open to what surprises God has in mind for us, it is like we are always shopping at the same market: we know what limited offerings are available and choose out of habit, and we never think of going elsewhere for a different selection of supplies. Would you prefer the future that imagination offers from within your isolated, small mind and perspective, or the connected and universal future Creator imagines for you instead?

As we awaken to our felt self, we feel ourselves called to rejoin the community that is Earth. To renounce the isolation, separation, and individuality this culture has used to control us is to submit, to surrender, to the Whole and **its** needs. Our lives are not our own; we are bound to others, both in our need and in our service. Rejoining the ocean that is life returns us to the waves that pass by and that we ride joyfully; because surfing, or just **being with** the water and thus going along with its flow, is our inherent nature.

In the end, we want to be safe and we want to be happy as we pursue our purpose here in this reality. Our understanding of spirituality forms our roots; it is critical that as we awaken to the problems of our society and wish to craft a future that solves these issues, that we address our spiritual life. What would it take to have a society where we need less security every year, and not

more? Is any politician proclaiming this as a goal? Is anyone upholding this as a vision for the future? Are we capable of envisioning a society where we feel at home among each other, a society of growing trust, and not a society resembling a prison more and more with each passing year? It is not OK, that we have a society that does not give our members the tools we need for healthy, sane survival; one that chooses greed over care, that allows mental illness to go untreated, and that forces the young and the elderly to be cared for by institutions rather than family or friends because those people *have to work* outside the home to survive. I want a society that cares for all of our members, including the animals and plants and land and oceans and sky! How can coming to greater spiritual understanding help us find our way to that future?

“Exposing the lie being perpetrated on humanity is our number one calling. Information and knowledge give power to humanity. What separates us from the fullness of being that we inherently are is basically a magic show, a very dark intentioned magic show by forces that do not want an empowered humanity but rather a channeled and harnessed work force and energy source.

“We are being mined, farmed, milked, and bled to death. The encasement of this illusory matrix-driven world system needs to be shot full of holes so everyone can see it for the ensnaring veil of lies that it is. Think of it as a giant row boat we’re all paddling by some obscure design of its creators. What if we were to wake up to the fact that this very machination we think is so essential to cross the sea was what was keeping us from joining the Ocean of fullness – the very

place where we'd find total activation, fulfillment and unity with each other and our divine Source? Wouldn't you want to sink the damn thing, and in a hurry?

"They tell us to patch it up, keep it floating, that we can't live without it. Fear, worry, scarcity, death, we need controls, we need a system to provide for us. *"You can't live without our boat. You'll drown out there on your own without us to protect you."*

"Oh yeah? I say pull the flipping plugs! All of 'em! Separate the planks, chuck the paddles! Or stab or shoot the lying containment system full of holes with anything you've got! In other words, expose the lie for what it is in any way we can and may it sink into oblivion!" Zen Gardner

We humans are always doing spiritual practice, whether we call it that, or even acknowledge it. Let no experience be wasted. Every moment is a challenge to step up and over the old dark and shadowy ways and into the bright light of clarity and understanding. When something *bad* happens, train yourself to not say, *"Why did this have to happen to me?"*, and instead begin to say, *"This is how it is. Let me turn toward it, let me experience all of it, let me learn from it and practice with it, and let me move beyond entanglement and drama and into gratitude and peace with what is. What story allows love to show through me during this?"* You can't hold onto the emotion of the moment for any length of time; best to enjoy it, learn from it, then let it go. Trying to hold onto it, or recreate it, means you are ignoring the next moment and what it has to offer. And what if, instead of using focusing awareness and meditation to explore our own happiness and enlightenment, we instead focus on the happiness and

enlightenment of someone in our family? And once that is easy, focusing on the happiness and enlightenment of others, including those whom we view as *enemies*? That is what spiritual development is all about: seeing how the enlightenment of others helps us become enlightened.

Some masters speak of goodness, truth, and beauty. Some name the virtues awareness, truth, and love. Some say Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Still others say, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. **Goodness** and awareness point to the present moment; how our clarity and understanding of what is really going on in our world of duality points the way to the only timeless, perfect universal aspect: the non-dual, where there is only the one energy that is the ground upon which we tread; the place where one taste of any aspect anywhere is the same. **Truth** is stepping out of the story that we tell; our history, our excuses, our explanations, and into the experience of what is happening without the need to deflect or detract or change. And **beauty** is found in the awe of relationship; how we understand our connection, how we see the love in another that is the reflection of the love we have for ourselves. Love yourself as you love your neighbor: in the original Aramaic language that Jesus spoke, that saying translates into “***love anyone you think about as you love the breath of your own life.***”

A key step on this path is deeply understanding that we cannot do anything alone or in isolation; every action we contemplate draws on the ideas, work, or resources of others who came before or who are here now. And though we must do our best, whatever good comes from what we do is not our own production, our personal accomplishment. This is why gratitude is so important.

In every aspect of our lives, we can sense the interconnectedness of all life; and that leads to a desire

to take care of our environments and our relationships, the outward manifestations of this holistic world. We can't separate our philosophy, our worldview, and our actions into pieces that we deal with one at a time; each part contributes to the whole and is present in each moment as we experience our life. If we can actually, clearly *see* others in all our interconnected glory, then we are more likely to have compassion for others, to act gently towards them, and to want to serve them in some appropriate way.

Our most magical moments are full of mystery and being. Calvin Martin Luther writes, describing the practicality of the different worldview of the Eskimo people, that their "...*stories explained a way of life incredibly different from the white man's world. Stories explaining a different reality going on here: that strange process of disappearing into the mysteries of the earth to be reborn back into human shape, **knowing now the meaning of kinship.***" We *moderns* have these experiences too, although not nearly as frequently. Even when we do though, our ego and our rational mind are quick to deny them, to explain them away, to make them utterly meaningless; we call them *fever dreams* as if to say they are symptoms of a sickness we must overcome.

To demand knowing is to condemn ourselves to only doing. We search art for meaning. Clarity is prized, but insufficient. We seek others to tell us what to think or do in order to end mystery and introduce orthodoxy, or *right view*. But reality is not to be *fixed*. Solutions always engender unforeseen consequences. Like a Gordian knot we may destroy that which we value through inappropriate *solutions*. The growth we seek is for higher states of awareness; and our goal is to awaken to these states easier, more often, and for longer periods of time. We also seek to see the true nature of all

the numerous, instantaneous sensations and emotions that make up each moment; regardless of what they are and without judging *good* or *bad*, but instead to lead us to an understanding of reality that transcends any specific condition. This calls us to work hard now so that we awaken **in a world that we want to inhabit**, not just a world in which we **live**.

If we begin to question our separation; if we begin to build relationships that do not require subservience to the patriarchal model of society and that instead hold each person to be equal and needed; if we turn our backs upon the old and simply refuse to participate in that game anymore; these are the actions that cannot be tolerated, that must be punished, that must be ended even by violence if necessary. I feel that many people get this far in the analysis and then stop short. They spiral off into discussions about whether it is more effective to protest and fight for change in the system (outer) or to spend our energy raising our own consciousness (inner) or to build new systems alongside the old, systems that we want to become the new institutions when the old system collapses under the weight of dysfunction and magical thinking (substitution). There is another approach that I have never heard discussed, possibly because it is difficult to see how it could manifest from within the belly of the capitalist beast. That way is to adopt, literally, the mindset of an early immigrant to our culture. A foundational piece of the American cosmology centers on the contributions made by the early waves of immigrants; of course, immigration was what founded this culture. People came here from Europe, primarily England, in the early 1600s to build a new life in a new land. They made what can only be described as **an irrevocable choice**; they had neither the resources nor the possibility to return to their birthplace, they were committed to remaining in this new land no matter

what. Forsaking the old ways and old systems was permanent and complete. Is it possible that we are having such trouble manifesting new ways of being precisely because we are too comfortable using the old ways and lack any real and tangible need to make a change? What would it look like if you or I were to make a similar commitment today: **to completely forsake participation in American culture or capitalism?** To say *no* to money, the technology money allows us to buy, and the idea of *owning* property that we trust will provide income for us in our old age? What would it mean to make an irrevocable promise to avoid anything of the *old* American culture and to only live by the new rules? Would we start intentional communities? How long would it take before we were truly self-sufficient in providing our own food and water? Where would we be living, since it seems impossible to do this inside any city? What does it feel like, to rebel and withdraw in such a complete manner? How much diversity; of opinion, lifestyle, and knowledge, would be required within our community for us to flourish? How would we learn to not just tolerate but to celebrate that diversity and thus prevent it from tearing us apart? And perhaps most importantly: would it increase the likelihood of success if we were to cut ourselves off from the ways of doing that we so abhor, or would it merely deepen our own separation and thus dysfunction? In the end, it is only through raising consciousness, becoming more aware of our interconnections than our differences, that a sustainable culture can be created. Must we wait for the old to die before crafting this new way of being? Or can we make the kind of commitment that an immigrant makes: turning our backs on the old ways and **never looking back?** Admitting that we are powerless to control our world is the first step on the road to recovery and healing. We can talk about making changes in our

lives from the time we wake until the time we sleep; but until we finally grasp the futility of remaining in the old world, we will be unable to quit it. Only then will we muster the courage to move forward into our new life.

This points to a big change in how we approach life. We can focus on intention and character, or *values*. Or we can focus on our actions, or *means*. Or we can focus on the consequences of both of these, both on Man and on Nature, or *ends*. But if we are to be whole, integral, and aware of the complete *self*, then we focus on all of these aspects. In our groups, within ourselves, in our relationships, in what we're doing in our communities, how can we be creating a culture that supports us to be in a state of feeling resourced, feeling empowered, feeling seen and appreciated? When we're all in that state of being open and creative and connected with each other and with ourselves, we make the best decisions. This is how we're able to take the longest and the widest view, and to see the consequences of what we do.

What do you do, now that you know? How do you handle the cognitive dissonance when your enculturated ego confronts the double bind: when your trust in government is so obviously misplaced? What actions can you take that will soothe your shattered heart, broken by the injustice all around you?

Eckhart Tolle offers his opinion that basically rebellion with a particular goal in mind is not the answer; rather, that our inner work is key:

“We need to save the planet, of course. Yes, it’s true that we need to save the planet. But let’s not fall into the erroneous thinking that all the solutions are out there somewhere. Because most of the problems – violence, pollution, war, terrorism – all those things have their origin in human consciousness or unconsciousness. So

your primary responsibility is not doing anything outside of you; your primary responsibility is your own state of consciousness. And once that is achieved, then whatever you do and whomever you come into contact with, and even the many people you don't come into contact with, get affected by your state of consciousness. If you don't take responsibility for your state of consciousness, and you believe that all the solutions are out there, then you fall into errors like they did with communism, for example. The initial motivation for communism was actually idealistic; it was good. The proponents said, *"There's so much injustice in the world; there are people who are exploiting millions of others,"* which was true. They wanted to create a society that was more just and fair and to do away with personal property. It all sounded wonderful, but what they had neglected was there was no change in their consciousness. And once they got into power, **they re-created the same evils**. What they ended up with was as bad as, if not worse than, what they had fought against. So many revolutions have ended up like that, but good intentions are not enough if you bring your old state of consciousness to them... Awakened doing is when you don't create suffering anymore for others, or for yourself, by your own actions. It also implies that your primary intention, the focus of your attention, is on the **doing** in the present moment, rather than on the result that you want to achieve through it. Joy flows into what you do, rather than stress. Stressful energy arises when you think some future moment is more important

than the present moment, and the doing becomes only a means to an end.”

Everything is connected into the Web of Life. The micro reflects the macro: as above, so below. Every cell in your body has the same elements as your whole entity: metabolism, reproduction, movement, a nervous system, and two-way communication with the *outside* of both information and resources. No peace, no justice; know peace, know justice. We surrender in order to be a channel, we give up our ego to allow the Universe to use us and to guide our evolution. Jung says that the Self is revealed **once the ego has surrendered**. Our bodies are instruments of action and perception, not ornaments or mere transportation for the benefit of our ego. The felt self, having no ego, is reflected in the land, sea sky, fire, and life that surrounds us and within which **we are**. Being is not passive; it transforms energy by being receptive, engulfing. Ultimately we are on a journey from the *known* world into the world of what *is*; and those of us who see through these new eyes experience a mysterious and magical present moment that is bursting with possibilities, largely unseen. Settle back and let these big ideas and concepts challenge your inner status quo. Then go out and **change our world**. Ultimately, this life is about meeting challenges, not avoiding them. How will you show up today? And tomorrow?

Calvin Luther Martin opens his book, *“The Way of the Human Being”* by describing how stories have **yua**, or *spirit* in the language of the Yup’ik Eskimos. He mentions that sometimes it is even difficult to tell if you are thinking the story, or **if the story is thinking you**. Here’s what he writes to illustrate these two points:

“He was Eskimo, he was Inupiaq, from the North Slope, and like some other Eskimos I have known he bore one name only: Katauq. And it

was his own, original name. Anyway, Katauq was sitting in his igloo one day when those with him noticed that he moved not a muscle, although he continued to breathe. They knew he had gone *traveling*, his spirit had left his body to go see how things were at some other place. They knew if they left his body perfectly still, his spirit would find his body mask again when it returned from its journey, and he would be just fine.

“Katauq’s spirit traveled to a great meeting of bowhead whales. They gave him a parka to wear, and when he put it on, he was one of them. Traveling with the whales as a whale, he learned their habits and their ways.

“As spring came on, the whales informed him that they would be traveling along the coast. When they came to Point Hope, they would be met by whalers. He would notice that some of their umiaks [whaling boats] would be nice and light in appearance, and some dark and dirty. If he wished to be caught by a whaler, then he should surface by one of the clean and light boats. These belonged to good people, respectful people. They shared their catch with the children who had no parents, with widows, and with the Elders. They were kind people, with good hearts. Their ice cellars were clean: good places for a whale to have its parka of meat and muktuk stored. The dark, dirty boats belonged to people who did not share their catch, and who were lazy. No whale wanted to give itself to their boats.

“If Katauq were to go to the village as a whale, and give himself to the whalers, his spirit could not return to his human body. It could put on another whale parka, but it could never go to the human. He could, however, fly back to Point

Hope as an eider duck. Then his spirit could
return to his body.

“That’s what he did: flew right back as an eider
duck.”

R Evolution

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I had just turned 9 years old when President Kennedy was shot and killed in Dallas. I could not have been expected to understand much about that tragic event: details of the who, why, or how of it; and for sure very few adults at the time knew the answers to those questions either. But today I so often find that when we look back on our history we can hear voices from long ago that speak to us as if they are speaking to us today. Why didn't we listen to these prophets then? Why did we dismiss them as *radical* or *crazy*? why did we kill them? For surely it is the very culture itself that rises up, in an act of self-defense, against those of us who see the truth and dare to speak it.

Example: in this speech, a graduation commencement address at a religious university, President Kennedy announced to the world an agreement to install a hotline with the Kremlin, and he proposed the Nuclear Test Ban treaty. He spoke about why he was promising to the world that the US would never again test a nuclear weapon in the atmosphere unless others did so first. This **unilateral** step towards disarmament must have scared the shit out of the military-industrial complex, and looking back on it now, is likely what sealed his death warrant. Near the end, he says, ***in words we need to hear and understand today*** more than we did on 10 June 1963⁶⁹:

“...peace and freedom walk together. In too many of our cities today, the peace is not secure because freedom is not

⁶⁹ Watch the entire 23-minute speech at <http://tiny.cc/zlvj4w>

complete... and is not peace, in the last analysis, a basic human right? The right to live out our lives, without fear of devastation; the right to breathe air, as Nature provided it; the right of future generations to a healthy existence. While we proceed to safeguard our national interests, let us also safeguard human interests. And the elimination of war and arms is clearly in the interests of both.”

We are farther from his vision of peace and freedom than we have been since he uttered these words more than 50 years ago. It is the aim of *We Are All On Flight 93* to ignite a firestorm in you, dear reader, to do something to begin to bring his vision closer to fruition. This portion of the book will focus on ideas and yes, for those of you who love this sort of thing, lots of bullet pointed lists that give you actionable items you can ponder blending into your activism⁷⁰. We will appreciate all of the work and danger involved in these actions once the old has collapsed and we still have resources remaining to build anew. If we wait for it to fall on its own; who knows what will be left for our reconstruction!

Revolution means *reorganizing society as technology changes; reordering how work is accomplished, and who benefits as a result*. Our world has moved from the

⁷⁰ I include suggestions and lists under protest, and only because most readers like them. Truth is, there are no "steps" or Five Most Important Things to Do Now to Save the Planet. Those lists are mostly about assuaging the reader's guilt, rather than getting anything to change. But you could do a lot worse than this: slow down. Feel more. Purchase less. Sit at the base of a tree for an hour a day. Enjoy your one wild a precious life. Now you can skip to the Conclusion, and then hand the book to someone else.

technology of fire, to the bow-and-arrow, to the plow, to the engine, and now to the silicon chip; at each step of our evolution we have experienced a massive reorganization of work and society. This time **is not different!** Because we compromise; because we quit too soon; the *vision* of the current revolution becomes the *cause* of the next. The vision of the revolution brought about by engines and other machines was a society freed from the manual labor that took so much of our energy, time, and lives. Computers and the robots we can create using them give us our current cause: freedom from labor. In the mid-1900s, the introduction of the tractor eliminated the need for 11 million sharecroppers; they were *tractored off the land*. They were suddenly free of the need for their work, but how were they treated? They were shunted aside, left to die in shanty-towns or sleeping on sewer grates on a cold winter's night, invisible to those who now profited from the labor performed using machinery instead of human hands. Where were they supposed to go, what were they to do, as their way of life evaporated? Jump forward 70 years: computers and robotics have made manufacturing assembly jobs obsolete in the same way. Productivity has soared so much that companies get by with fewer and fewer workers. Again, millions of workers, who had been earning living wages that enabled them to support their families, lose their ability to work and get *chipped out of the factory*. Where are they to go, what are they to do?

The point is, silicon chips are opening a window into a future of *labor-less production*. In the 1930s, 65% of workers were farming; today it takes less than 2% of our workforce to produce food. In fact, less than 15% of all American workers perform tasks that are essential to life; the remaining 85% are producing luxury. Sadly, that also means that 85% of our *work* is about

mindless consumption, the very part of the economy that has to be sharply curtailed if we are to a) have a more equitable distribution of resources and wealth, and b) have any planet left to live on. Our participation rate: the percentage of working-age people who actually have jobs, has been falling for many years. Despite hearing the vaunted figure of 7+% for unemployment in 2013, the actual percentage working is a mere 58%, meaning that really, **unemployment stands at 42%**. Throw in the fact that a survey tells us more than half of the workers approaching retirement age are planning to continue working since they haven't the means that would allow them to stop collecting a paycheck following decades when the retirement funding burden has moved from companies to individuals, and there appears no easy solution to the *under-utilization of workers* we see today. I would like to think that these workers so enjoy their jobs, they wouldn't dream of quitting. I would, however, be wrong! Of course, their inability to retire has nothing to do with the fact that money managers and banks have been siphoning off *just a few* percent annually from every account; or that many of the pensions that are still offered workers are drastically, and in some cases criminally, underfunded.

But that is only one perspective on where we are today in terms of work; there are other views. The new technologies, computers and robotics, free us from the need to work; but that would re-order society in a way that reminds too many people of the dreaded *communism*, and thus we are unable to even discuss the impact technology could have on our lives and marketplaces. But think about this: the *vision* of the Industrial Revolution was that machines would allow man to be more productive, and to work less. That means that our *cause* today is to actually manifest that dream. Today we demand that people either work for

money, to buy the necessities of life, or have a relationship with someone who can work and thus care for them. This model often leaves people behind; and so we have government programs, often manipulated by those who understand the rules, that support those who can't work for some reason. Many workers resent being taxed to pay for those who can't work, and the driving force behind that resentment is the sense that someone is getting away with not working. Why do we insist that everyone work? If only 15% of our working population, which translates into less than ten percent of all those of working age, are needed to provide food, water, and shelter for everyone in our country, why can't we provide this for everyone free of charge? It would cost about what we are already spending to support the banks and pay for our military; if we were to eliminate those expenditures, **we wouldn't have to work**. Since tens of millions of people are willing to volunteer even when they have jobs, it is clear that we could get enough people to work in essential services once work was not required in order to eat! As we advance the state-of-the-art in robotics, the cost of food production would decrease. And if we were to change our monetary system: stop insisting that interest be paid on money that was created out of thin air, and eliminate or severely limit profit from health care and other essential businesses, it costs us even less. Can't we explicitly say that if you are happy merely to exist, then feel free to live that life? If, however, you want an iPad or a car, then you need to find something that can provide you the funds for that? The notion that we have to *work* for our supper is an old one, but not so old that we can't call it what it is: an idea that arises from the mindset that sees scarcity, rather than abundance, as dominant in our world. We may be running headlong into a wall of resource constraints; however, those constraints mainly

affect the heavily consumptive lifestyle of modern America. Given the support of enough people, we can return to living for experiences and relationships, not plastic, disposable things, and our resources will go much further and last much longer. Continue to burn coal and oil like there is no tomorrow, and guess what; there will be no tomorrow! Interest on loans, rents from *owned* properties, dividends from speculation and short-term *renting* of stock certificates; none of these ways of creating *riches* that contribute anything healthy or helpful to our society. Real wealth is healthy families, healthy communities, and healthy Nature; currently much of the work that creates real wealth is unpaid, yet people do it anyway. Can we begin to recognize that caring for young, sick, or elderly people counts as work and qualifies one to receive life's necessities? How might that look, in practice? Might we shift to *full-time* work being 20 or 30 hours per week? That way, more people could be working, instead of the workers today working 50 – 60 hours, and not having time for any real relationships other than at work. Also, we need to get past the idea that some work is worth 300 times what the minimum pay rate is: no one who is working full-time should be unable to care for their family on their wage. This battle of what the *minimum* wage should or could be has yet to be settled. Capitalists, despite repeated studies that prove the assertion wrong, continue to claim that raising wages will force them to cut jobs. There are reasons why this is not true:

- The cost of labor is built into the price of the goods or services; if wages rise, so do prices. However, studies consistently show that prices never rise as much as opponents of the wage increase claim beforehand, and **few jobs ever get cut**. There are states and cities that are on board with the living wage concept; yet you don't

find businesses closing or workers being laid off there

- Maintaining a minimum wage that does not allow a worker to support his or her family **externalizes costs** from the company onto the taxpayers. I'll use the fast food industry as the example for this point: two studies were released in October 2013; both pointed out that over half (52%) of workers at fast food outlets received government assistance such as food stamps, welfare, low-cost housing, or taxpayer-paid health care. In fact, for 2011, the total cost to taxpayers of aid provided to fast food employees totaled over \$7 billion. And the combined profit of fast food companies that year? Wait for it... \$7.2 billion. I love synchronicity! So taxpayers are subsidizing the owners of McDonald's and Burger King and all the rest; I'm sure that was your intent when you sent in you tax payments out of every paycheck! Wouldn't it be better to ensure a living wage is paid to all workers than to subsidize them out of tax revenues or government borrowing?
- Raising income means the lowest-paid workers will have more to spend. Unlike with rich workers, who tend to invest their money rather than consume when they get a raise, raising the minimum wage will mean that all of the increase will quickly be spent; and that will boost the entire, global economy, making room for **more jobs**
- By paying a living wage, workers will be able to keep one parent at home to **care for children**. This is an incalculable benefit to society: no more latchkey kids, or kids raised almost entirely by

strangers at school and day care. Who can estimate how much anguish and agony we save by not having to deal with drug addiction or juvenile misbehavior or gang-related violence?

Besides changing how we view work, what does revolution call for at this time? The answer cannot be that we need government to step in and save us; nor that we just need to elect a new leader, or make new laws, or take on more debt in order to consume more. All of our institutions are failing us: they are corrupt, serving masters not of the people, and running roughshod over our rights, laws, and to be blunt, **our very humanity and the entire world in which we live**. We will not survive unless and until we bring about wholesale and fundamental change, the likes of which we have yet to see in our history in any conscious way. In other words, our focus must be on non-cooperation and intervention to save lives; whether those lives are threatened when a family loses its home, when a student takes on more debt than can possibly be repaid without a well-paying job, or when an addiction to drugs, alcohol, the internet, or dominant power games played upon a spouse, consumes an otherwise productive member of our tribe.

We have not made much progress over the last forty years: Note this bit⁷¹ of historical context:

On October 15, 1966 the Black Panther Party was founded by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton in response to rampant police brutality in Oakland. While ultimately decimated by state repression, the Black Panther Party during the late 1960s and early 1970s was one of the leading organizations in the United

⁷¹ Provided by the staff of www.popularresistance.org on October 15th, 2013

States advocating not just for black liberation, but for socialism and social justice more generally. Below is the 1972 Ten Point Program of the Black Panther Party. Dealing with issues of racism, police brutality, access to healthcare, housing, education, prisoners' rights, and US "wars of aggression" it is stunning how much of their platform remains relevant today.

1. **We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black and oppressed communities.** *We believe that Black and oppressed people will not be free until we are able to determine our destinies in our own communities ourselves, by fully controlling all the institutions which exist in our communities.*
2. **We want full employment for our people.** *We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the American businessmen will not give full employment, then the technology and means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.*
3. **We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black and oppressed communities.** *We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of 40 acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over 50 million Black people. Therefore, we feel this is a modest demand that we make.*
4. **We want decent housing, fit for the shelter of human beings.** *We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people in our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.*

5. **We want decent education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.** *We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of the self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and in the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.*
6. **We want completely free healthcare for all Black and oppressed people.** *We believe that the government must provide, free of charge, for the people, health facilities which will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but which will also develop preventive medical programs to guarantee our future survival. We believe that mass health education and research programs must be developed to give all Black and oppressed people access to advanced scientific and medical information, so we may provide ourselves with proper medical attention and care.*
7. **We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of Black people, other people of color, and all oppressed people inside the United States.** *We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against black people, other people of color and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces and that all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self-defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.*
8. **We want an immediate end to all wars of aggression.** *We believe that the various conflicts which exist around the world stem directly from the aggressive desire of the United States ruling circle and government to force its domination upon the oppressed people of the world. We believe that if the United States government or its lackeys do not cease these aggressive wars it is the right of the people to defend themselves by any means necessary against their aggressors.*

9. **We want freedom for all Black and oppressed people now held in U.S. federal, state, county, city, and military prisons and jails. We want trials by a jury of peers for all persons charged with so-called crimes under the laws of this country.** *We believe that the many Black and poor oppressed people now held in United States prisons and jails have not received fair and impartial trials under a racist and fascist judicial system and should be free from incarceration. We believe in the ultimate elimination of all wretched, inhuman penal institutions, because the masses of men and women imprisoned inside the United States or by the United States military are the victims of oppressive conditions which are the real cause of their imprisonment. We believe that when persons are brought to trial they must be guaranteed, by the United States, juries of their peers, attorneys of their choice and freedom from imprisonment while awaiting trial.*
10. **We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, peace, and people's community control of modern technology.** *When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long*

established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are most disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpation, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

If we substitute *citizens* for *Black people* we could do far worse than to work to fulfill this list of demands. It is important to note that everything we have tried: regulations, petitions, marches, consciousness-raising, weekend retreats and conventions; it has all failed to bring us solutions to these issues. Given that we need to create a system that works for everyone, let's keep these demands in mind as we ask some **deep** questions:

- People seem to always say, “*This time it’s different...*” Debt is not a *problem*; this war is just; *they* did it, why can’t we; he *deserves* to die; you get my point. The question is, what if it’s not different? Then what? Where will **you** draw the line and say, “*Enough! Not in my house!*”
- People also say, “*Technology will rescue us; humans are very creative!*” But tech always seems to manifest unforeseen consequences: toxic manufacturing processes, increasing our isolation from our community, oppression of people in other countries just to provide the raw materials and cheap labor it needs to be *profitable*; a drawing back of the curtain that shields our privacy... Can we begin to question the value of new technology, and to seek out the consequences it will engender before we take it up, so we may better weigh and judge if this is a

technology we want to bring into our world? This of course is a big concern about geo-engineering: how much is enough, how much is too much? And how will we know?

- As our technology progresses, we are increasingly isolated from our neighbors, hiding behind our touch screens and WiFi connections. Most of us remain glued to a centrally-planned and -maintained system of electricity and water: if we have no community ties, how do we survive when something happens to our power or our water? We buy food that comes from thousands of miles away, isolated from its source so we can't know of the toxic or slave-like conditions in which it was grown and harvested. Do you have neighbors, in your complex or on your block, who depend on refrigeration for medications, or power to run an oxygen machine, who might die if the power goes out after a natural disaster? Are you sure you know everyone, and know the answer to this question, or are you shrugging your shoulders and thinking this question is no big deal?
- Discussions are driven by the loudest voices, regardless of their sanity. Witness the Tea Party-led lockdown of government in October 2013: representatives for 11% of the **voters**, meaning less than 5% of all American citizens, held the country's government hostage and drove what passed for debate with catchy sound bites rather than substantive discourse. How would we have reacted, if instead of the Republican demand to eliminate the Affordable Care Act in return for votes to continue government spending, the Democrats had taken the country into shutdown

while insisting that Congress include an assault weapons ban in the funding bill, because too many children are dying as a result of gun violence? How can we take back the government that is supposed to be of and for the *people*? How can we return power to our community so that we can address the situations that arise in our local watershed?

- Too often, **as in always**, personal solutions to our global problems are inadequate and don't scale up well. When more than 25% of the particulate matter in the air over Los Angeles originated in coal-fired power plants in China (2012), **there is no local solution**. *Solutions* as practiced today involve compromise; and that involves letting the bad behavior continue, hopefully reduced in scale enough that it will only hurt us, not kill us. It would not have been a success to negotiate and agree with Hitler that he would only send half as many people to his gas chambers, and in return we'll be allowed to set up a new commission to monitor and report back to the Allies on how well he is maintaining his end of the bargain, provided that all the Allied countries continue to fund the new commission. In compromise, there is an inherent willingness to sacrifice – in the name of getting a win-win with big polluters who are the cause of the problem – the actual people and communities that are living in the hell the pollution has created. Communities today like Richmond, California, for instance, who tell you point-blank, *“We fight climate change so that our kids won't get as much asthma.”* There is no win-win solution here because you can't get a deal that says, *“OK you guys can keep polluting but you're*

going to have to buy some offsets on the other side of the planet” and still save your children from asthma. Take the deal that lets polluters get off the hook and any local win is gone, sacrificed in the name of **compromise**. I’m in favor of win-win, please don’t misunderstand. I am only arguing that our responses to climate change can rebuild the public sphere, can strengthen our communities, and can provide everyone work with dignity, if properly conceived. We can address the financial crisis and the ecological crisis at the same time. But those wins happen by **building coalitions with people**, not with corporations. And what I see is a willingness to sacrifice the basic principles of solidarity, whether it is solidarity with the people of Richmond, Calif., or whether it’s with that Indigenous community in Brazil that is being forced off their territory because their forest has just become a carbon sink or an **offset** and they no longer have access to the land that has allowed them to live sustainably for thousands of years because now the world needs it so it’s policed and **protected**. All because a conservation group on a different continent, with no ties or just authority over the land, has decided to trade it away for tax revenue or profit. So there are a lot of losers in this model and there aren’t any wins I can see, despite what the media or government or corporations⁷² are telling us. Yet this is the way the environmental groups have approached oil and carbon since the establishment of environmental **controls** in the

⁷² Yeah, I know that “*media or government or corporations*” is redundant; it is all one entity now.

early 1970s. How do we come to see that many of the activities and beliefs of our modern American culture must be ended, not merely reduced, if we are to survive? How do we have this discussion using media that is controlled by our Masters? When will we learn that compromise is ineffective when the problem is deadly?

- As you think about the problems we face today, all of the ones that threaten humanity and other life on Earth are global in scale and causation. What local or personal solution can you offer that will prevent rising sea levels from making Miami uninhabitable? There are none... It is fine to be against one-world-government; but if we let that opinion stall any solutions, we might as well end it all right now and save some suffering later. The big question is this: is it even possible to solve global problems *without* global governance or, worse, violence against people? What does that look like?
- We have our priorities backwards: we allow mass species extinction in order to protect capitalism; we tolerate pollution while ignoring its effects on our lives; and we value phantom, paper riches over the real wealth of healthy families, safe communities, and clean ecosystems. We think that money solves all problems; yet studies consistently show that once basic necessities of food, water, and shelter are met, increasing consumption does not make anyone happier. How can we build a future that sets our priorities well and makes most people happy? How can we begin to remember that there are alternatives: economies and governments and money have all been handled in a multitude of ways, and many

much more effective than what we have today?

How can we do things differently?

- Here's a big one: if it is true that there can't be infinite growth on a finite planet, and that there are real limits to how much oil and how many minerals we can extract cheaply from our Mother Earth, and that there is a cap on how much toxic pollution a human being can absorb and still live; then how do we decouple our economy from a system that needs constant growth, cheap and abundant resources, and toxic manufacturing processes? What will downsizing our consumption look like? How will we create jobs that aren't dependent upon dysfunctional economic models? **How can we feed and shelter everyone?**
- We humans have experienced the First Age of Energy: the age of wood. Until the last fifty years, this energy economy was the key driver in global deforestation⁷³. Haiti is 95% deforested because all of the island's trees were turned into charcoal, just as one hideous example. We have experienced the Second Age of Energy: the age of coal. Investigate what it was like to live in London in 1850 to see what **that** was like⁷⁴. We have experienced the Third Age of Energy: the age of oil. Unfortunately, we didn't limit our use of oil to just energy: it is such an amazing compound that it not only provides us with 95% of our transportation fuels, but also nearly every consumer item we buy because we make all types

⁷³ Now, deforestation is driven by the need for land to grow food and biofuel crops.

⁷⁴ In fact, still today more than half of the electricity in the U.S. comes from coal-fired generating plants.

of plastic from it, and also nearly every foodstuff, as we make fertilizers and pesticides from oil and the natural gas often found with it. But with new wells now (2012) extracting oil at a cost of \$92 per barrel, the only way gas for transportation gets back to prices that we think are reasonable is if the economy tanks so badly that there is only half the demand for transportation as we muster up now. Half the people commuting? That doesn't sound like a good way to lower the price of gas to me since we haven't the resources left to build a mass transit system that would accomplish this goal!

- This is often where someone chimes in with one word: *conservation*. Can we be honest? Although it seems, on the surface, to make sense: we waste far too much energy, primarily because it has been so cheap for so long, that surely if we just watch what we use more closely we can use less. But this conservation strategy has been tried in other instances of shortages or tight supplies. In every case, conservation works initially, driving down consumption. Estimates are that we waste 30% of our oil, 40% of our food, and 50% of our electricity. That would have a huge impact on how quickly we run out if we were to cut those amounts just in half. But in every case, once the demand is lowered, then prices fall as well. We operate, after all, in a supply-and-demand economy: when demand falls, prices fall, and then people who either couldn't afford the higher prices now come to the marketplace to buy, or some enterprising company finds new products that use the now-cheap resource, driving up *overall* demand, quickly returning total usage to its prior level. The real question here is: can we

get beyond small feel-good efforts like conservation, and **completely rethink how we feed and shelter ourselves?**

- Our need now is to move into the Fourth Age of Energy, beyond oil. Most people, having taken in the media stories over the last few decades about *green* technology, think that it will be the Age of Renewables. Somehow, we are told, solar and wind power will replace oil and we will be able to restore, using technology and even lab-created bacteria or genetically modified organisms (GMOs), the ecosystems that oil damaged. This ignores many fundamental issues with renewables; thus the Fourth Age is likely to be *Unconventional Oil* instead. **This is not good news:** research what fracking means to our land and water supplies, both in terms of quantity and quality, because of the processes it requires. Also research what it means to burn oil that is not as energy efficient as what we've tasted for decades; in fact, the refined tar sands product, although referred to as *oil*, is so nasty that American machines and engines can't use it⁷⁵. It will all go to China or other countries where it can be burned in less efficient, and far dirtier, engines than what we have here. Biofuels might make a stab at helping, although growing and pouring corn into gas tanks is only a solution when government subsidies pay farmers to divert corn out of the food chain. Without this help, the

⁷⁵ Those who don't understand think that tar sands will make the U.S. oil import-free in the next five years. The fact is that the tar sands from Canada will be refined into a product that will have to be shipped overseas and not used in the U.S., precisely because it is such an inferior fuel.

energy return on the energy invested is so poor it makes biofuels a losing proposition. Not to mention that in America, for biofuels to replace **just 1/3** of our oil would take **three times as much land as we now use to grow all of our food**. There are other possibilities for plant-to-gas products that take less land out of food production, or that return more energy output for energy input. Still, the deep question is: can we afford to pour food into autos just to maintain our system of commuting to work? Renewable technology is rife with hypocrisy and futility as we pursue the so-called *clean energy* solution to overpopulation, overconsumption, habitat destruction, endless growth, and climate change itself. It takes mountaintop removal and toxic chemicals contaminating soil and fresh water to make the batteries. It takes power to run the machinery for extraction of the raw materials, typically power that usually comes from conventional, i.e. dirty, power plants. It takes fossil fuels to manufacture the windmills and solar panels that are supposedly *green*. The power that is clean most likely comes from hydroelectric power; also problematic as it floods towns and habitats and leaches toxics from the soil. The conundrum this situation reveals is ignored as we go about planning our future; it seems that the lives, human and animal both, that are disrupted by new technologies don't count in our calculations of what is healthy for our future. Here are the four reasons why renewables will not be the answer we think they are:

- Solar and wind power cannot replace the liquid fuels now used in our

transportation systems for at least the next two decades. It would take at least that long to cycle out of use the current inventory of gas-powered cars, trucks, and planes, even if we forbade their manufacture today. That also assumes, incorrectly, that we have engines that can effectively replace those that use oil. The electric vehicles sold today still rely upon oil to manufacture their batteries, and far more than half of the electric car owners recharge their batteries using electricity generated from natural gas or coal.

- The solar panels and windmills are manufactured using processes and transportation that is steeped in oil. The batteries need oil in order to be manufactured for the same reasons. Once these machines are built, they are taken to their installation site using oil.
- Solar and wind and all the other non-conventional alternatives like geothermal and tidal, today account for **less than 3%** of our power in the U.S. That means that it would take a huge capital and resource investment to even manage to supply half of all of our power: where will we get the investment to build this capacity? Would you agree to higher prices or higher taxes to accomplish this? The big problem is that the actual cost would mean that taxes of 100% of income will not be enough. Then what?
- Again, solar and wind account for less than 3% of today's energy use: to generate 100% would use up nearly all of

the land we now use for farming. It appears that the best places to site large solar or wind power plants are in the same places where we grow our food. Is Mother Nature playing tricks on us, putting Sun and wind and good soil together?

- Here are some more issues surrounding the notion that renewables will ride to our rescue. All of the current solar panels **in the world** only replace two large coal-fired power plants, and China is opening a new coal-fired plant **every 10 days**. All replacements for oil require oil-powered machinery, or plastics which also derive from oil, to be manufactured. There are many claims of new *giant* oil fields; remember that the world currently uses a billion barrels of oil every 12 days as a yardstick to determine how *giant* the new field really is. When considering any of the new *brilliant* technologies, which always seem to make the headlines and make everyone comfortable that our lifestyle will continue indefinitely before quickly fading from view, ask:
 - Is there a commercial-size working model?
 - What is the energy density, or how much fuel is needed to match a single barrel of oil?
 - How much energy input is needed, and how much output does that provide?
 - Can it be easily and safely stored or easily distributed?
 - Can it replace our current liquid fuel, gasoline, which is used in 95% of our transportation system? How much new

investment will it require to replace gasoline?

- Is it constant, and able to maintain baseload on the national grid, or intermittent?
- Can it be scaled up to a national level, and if so, what will that cost and how long will it take to replace more than half of our current oil usage?
- Are the side-effects well known, well-understood, and easily dealt with or of no concern?
- Have **all** of the engineering challenges been solved?
- Do we have the political will and the ability to cooperate that will be required to replace our current oil-based transport system and economy?
- Are we ready to tackle building an international consensus, locating the funding, engineering the retrofitting of oil extraction, refining, and distribution systems to accommodate using the new source of power in transportation, manufacturing, and agricultural systems? Do we have the management expertise to pull off this transition smoothly?
- Can we replace the plastics, the fertilizers, and the pesticides that derive as byproducts from oil? (Just one tire for your auto takes 7 gallons of oil to produce!)
- And remember, technology is not energy: it can channel energy to do work, but it is not the resource itself. Thus a

- technological answer is not available to end our dependence on fossil fuel.
- And if we manage to overcome all of these hurdles, could our current way of life continue unchanged? Hardly. There are too many issues around the reality of exponential growth and our inability to grow our economy forever on a finite planet, peak resources, dwindling supplies of fresh water, the effects of natural disasters on long-tail supply chains, the need to devote precious resources to relocate farms as the climate changes, and dozens more.
 - Capitalism as it is practiced today needs growth to such an extent that there wasn't even a term to denote a contracting economy until the *lunatic fringe* of economists began to use *degrowth*⁷⁶ a decade or so ago. If you want to deeply understand why growth is so fatal, make an internet search of *Dr. Bartlett Arithmetic* and watch the excellent lecture that pops up⁷⁷. But here's the crux of this matter: economic growth means more consumption. That means more waste, more resource extraction, more debt, more extinctions, more pollution, and **less peace and happiness**. How can we all let go of the imprint on our psyches that says that buying stuff is what we are on this earth to do? When will we get off the treadmill of watch, work, buy, watch, work, buy? When will we value what does

⁷⁶ Degrowth isn't in the dictionary of the MS Word spellchecker, 2013 edition!

⁷⁷ Or just go straight to <http://tiny.cc/8lzj4w>

make us happy: family, relationships, creativity, generosity, and love?

- If nothing else, the Occupy Wall Street Movement brought the concept of the 1% into the mainstream conversation. It is easy, from our vantage point outside the 1%, to point fingers and call names of those few people **who are only playing by the rules of this capitalistic game**. Can we understand that this movement, if we manage to make the changes needed to save civilization, cannot be about replacing the current 1% with a new 1%? **That never works!** We need a new way of living that *includes everyone*. The CEOs of Halliburton and of Citibank, for example, are not doing what they do because they are evil people; if they didn't do what they are doing, they would quickly be replaced. They are doing what the **system demands** that someone in their position do: globalize the extraction and the labor pools and the pollution, maximize profits, and socialize the losses and expenses whenever possible. This is what makes this such a struggle: it is the system that must change, not one or two individual bad people. And a side note: although we rail against the 1%, realize that from the global perspective, all **Americans are in the 3%**. If you have: a roof over your head, clothes in a closet, food in a refrigerator, and a bed to sleep in, you are better off than **73%** of the people in the world today. If you have indoor plumbing, you are better off than **39%**⁷⁸. And despite these appalling statistics: reported happiness in the U.S is only

⁷⁸ Understand, please what that means exactly: those people pee and poop in their yard.

average for the whole world, **at 25%**. That's what we need to question: how we can have so much, **and still have so little of what really counts.**

- Many activists talk of localizing the economy as being the ultimate solution. I agree that having relationships with neighbors and farms close by makes me happier. But if you are thinking that local food will solve the carbon emission problem by lowering the need to transport food from farms thousands of miles away, think again. Growing feed for the meat Americans eat, and transporting that meat to your local market, uses more oil than all other forms of transportation **combined**. So better than eating local is eating less meat. Start with a meatless meal a day; how hard is that? An economy that can manage down-sizing our consumption also makes it impossible to use a money that generates interest. In short, money is created by making a loan to someone; the money to pay the interest is not created at the same time; someone has to take a new loan soon to create the money that I can *earn* and use to make my interest payments, and a third person has to take on debt so that the second person can back his interest, and so on. Occasionally someone will default on their collateralized loan, and the bank will repossess an asset that has had some principal and interest paid, which it then sells again using another loan, and that catches us up on the interest shortfall from the original loans. Hard to grasp, I know. Like trying to understand the reality of banking today: your deposit is not stored by the bank, the bank lists you on their books as a creditor, last in line for repayment

should the bank liquidate due to insolvency, which is the justification now being used for *bail-ins*. Already we have seen in Cyprus, Poland, and Ireland where bank accounts have been taxed, or municipal bonds taken without recompense to lower the government's liability to repay loans, precisely because we **depositors are merely lending our money to the bank.**

I often paraphrase Michael Ruppert: "*Until we change our money, we change nothing!*" The questions: how do we make banking into what it should be; a community resource? Can banks be a place to store money until we need it, where money that is stored there gets lent to people in our local community for their projects, without needing interest to be involved? What does it look like to shop only at locally-owned businesses so that profits recirculate among our neighbors? What does it **feel like** to invest in expanding opportunities for local commerce by providing capital to our neighbors, without any need to *get* something in return besides the satisfaction of generosity? What if making capital available, even at the level of big banks, could not increase the paper wealth of the lender?

- Let's now tackle the political football of *wealth redistribution*. Wealth is already being redistributed: **from the poor to the extremely rich.** What is absent from politics is a commitment to finding the **common good.** Instead, well-financed, highly organized, materially endowed interests pay for favors, secrecy, laws, and adjustments that increase their wealth. Think of oil subsidies: why are we still paying over \$60 billion a year in direct subsidies, and a total of \$245 billion in indirect

subsidies, to an industry that is the most profitable in human history? That can only be a redistribution of wealth from the less-well-off to the rich. If there is one lesson we can learn from conservative politicians, it is this: master the art of the sound bite. They are outstanding at staying on a bullet point and repeating it until it almost sounds true. *“Raising taxes is the dreaded wealth redistribution plan!”* *“Single payer health insurance will institute death panels!”* *“Taxing the job creators will start a Great Depression!”* In every one of these examples, the supposed *evil* is already happening, just involving someone who stands to lose **money** if the proposed laws are passed and withstand their court tests. Taxes were lowered in 2001 and 2003 by President Bush. They remained at the same historically-low rate until the end of 2012. During the years when the sound bite about not raising taxes on the wealthy was used to dissuade lawmakers from adjusting tax rates, did anyone ask the question, *“Taxes have been low now for many years: **where are the jobs?**”* We already have committees or individuals who decide who will get certain medical procedures, many that are a matter of life or death: it is called an **insurance company denying benefits**. So the questions are not do we raise taxes, do we have insurance companies, or how do we create jobs. That would be compromise! The questions we should be asking are:

- How do we reverse the trend of passing all the wealth to the few at the top, and instead ensure that everyone around the world has clean air and water, healthy food, and safe shelter? Once we all have

these basics provided, then we can begin to use our innate creativity to make this world a better place. Why do we put so much emphasis on rewarding the few at the top at the expense of the many? We don't have a food shortage, or a water shortage, or a shortage of building materials, yet. What we have now is a **distribution problem.**

- How can we reverse the structure that has made health care **for profit**? Doctors, nurses, researchers, even ambulance drivers and hospital administrators, all deserve to make a decent living providing health care. But why must every cost be measured against the bottom line of a company and its shareholders? Why does anyone have to pay for health insurance so that the company can afford to advertise? Why do doctors get paid primarily when we are sick, increasing their incentive to avoid discussing preventative medicine with us? I know this drifts uncomfortably close to the dreaded *communism* in some people's minds, but why can't we just determine fair wages, tally up the costs of providing health care, and have our government, already tasked with providing for the common good, cover those costs for everyone? Why is this so hard?
- The tax code now extends over more than six feet of tightly-typed bookshelf. In 2002, the State of California had 65 tax credits: 8 of those credits were claimed on 5 or fewer tax returns. This is an

egregious example of how tax policy has led us to enact tax laws that help the relatives or campaign donors of lawmakers. We already use tax policy as a tool of social engineering: the home mortgage interest deduction to encourage home ownership, the Earned Income Tax Credit to help low-income families, or a low tax rate for long-term capital gains to spur investment are good examples. Why not build on this concept: assuming we want to encourage people to work, make wages free of tax. If we want to encourage long-term investment, make those gains also tax-free. If we want to discourage speculation and high frequency trading, make the short-term gains tax rate 90%. Where would we get tax revenue from in this case? From a steep corporate tax. Again, social engineering: **because tax rates become part of the cost of the product, companies don't actually pay the tax, consumers do.** Want to encourage companies to hire? Offer credits for new full-time positions, add penalties for jobs that are cut here and sent overseas. Want to discourage them from polluting? Add tax penalties on companies that are cited for violating pollution laws. Want to discourage consumption? Make goods expensive and make not spending the best method to not pay tax. Yes, we need a tax overhaul. Can we use that to rework how we see employment in our larger social construct? How can we reward people

who take care of our young, our sick, and our elderly, usually without pay today? How can we bring them into the economy, or at least, redistribute some of our vast wealth to them as a reward for their work?

- Here's a not-so-short question: What have **you** done, since the Deepwater Horizon debacle destroyed the Gulf of Mexico in April 2010, to lessen your own personal need for oil, thus reducing the need for oil companies to find and extract oil from even more inhospitable locations⁷⁹? Is there any way to get and use oil that respects the needs of both Nature and man? If there is, why aren't we doing it now? If there isn't, why isn't our conversation about ending the use of oil, rather than the distraction of "*climate change, human caused or not?*" When we will get out of our denial that oil is problematic?
- Can we start to view media in a different, more questioning way? For instance: What is **this bit of news** trying to indoctrinate me about? What do the corporations want me to think about this event? Why is the focus of this story on this aspect and not cooperation or compassion? What is our government hiding or lying about in this

⁷⁹ Remember the debacle in the gulf in 2010, as BP struggled and tried several methods over weeks and months to stop the oil leak? What if that blowout had happened inside the Arctic Circle, in September, just as the ice started to form again? What if we had to let it *blow* uncontained for many months, until there was enough thaw to get back up there and try to stop it?

story? Why do the movies each season seem to have the same theme⁸⁰?

- How do we best become non-complicit? If we sit back and say, *“It’s not my problem, it’s too big for me to change, I’m waiting for a leader to show me the way”* then we allow the planet to be destroyed. How can we encourage the people with conscience to do the right thing, even in the midst of corporate board rooms? Speaking of courage, others before us **put their lives on the line** to give us our pleasure today; are we so weak that we will let the planet die rather than give up our electronic dreams?
- When we isolate from the world, acting from within our mere bag of flesh, seeing with eyes and interpreting with ideas that are locked inside our skull, we no longer belong to the Universe. We see all that surrounds us as exploitable: just a *resource* to use and discard, without a claim upon our heart. We feel no response-ability to the world, we only seek to safeguard ourselves and to control our world. The more magnanimous among us might also feel a duty to care for our family, or tribe, as well. If we are rewarded for living in separation by our society, then greed and exploitation quickly become considered *good*. After some period of time living from within this isolated, separate worldview, we begin naturally to hallucinate, as we are beings that deep down need connection

⁸⁰ Just in the first half of 2013, the theme was **world ended, humans almost gone**. Oblivion, After Earth, Day Z, The Host, etc.

and relationship to survive. What are some of the hallucinations this modern, known society is manifesting now?

- The elderly and the young are unnecessary and, unable to care for themselves, can and should be locked away out of sight, cared for by others⁸¹
- We are entitled to bananas in January
- We can own land (and other types of *property*)
- We are at the dawn of a new, everlasting prosperity: **of course** we can grow endlessly, who told you we couldn't? Corollary: more just-in-time economic growth or technological development will allow us to solve all of our problems before they make us extinct
- We can accrue gain without having to work by garnering interest payments or rents
- We need more rules and government intervention to have a chance of fixing our problems⁸²

⁸¹ This is NOT to disparage people who place relatives in caregiving situations; this IS to disparage a system that demands we spend so much time in work to be able to survive that we have no time for providing proper caregiving of our own family

⁸² Investigate *naked streets*: a few communities have performed the experiment of removing all controls from streets; no stop lights or signs, no speed limits, etc. **In all cases**, accidents and commute times decreased, and businesses along those naked streets saw profits increase. Relationship, not rules!

- Anyone who doubts the ability of society to carry on in the same manner as before is either hallucinating or ignorant or is fear-mongering with a hidden agenda
- We demand our government cut assistance to someone else, not people like me, or raise taxes on someone else, not me
- We sell guns and ban books
- We build luxury condos, while we bulldoze foreclosed homes and Senior Centers
- We leave homeless people to struggle for survival on our streets without mental health care
- We treat drug use as a crime, not as the medical or psychological problem that it really is
- We continue to treat the events of 9-11-01 as an attack of war, and not as a crime
- We limit access to education and health care to those who can afford it, and thereby widen the divide between haves and have-nots (even as 21% of the people **with** health insurance still can't afford the ER)
- We waste, upgrade, use the industrial version at home, and borrow to buy new. (The alternatives: use up, wear out, make do, and do without)
- If the consequences of this industrial economy mean we have to move, no problem! That's still *progress* ...

There are three types of people in America today. One sort relishes what is happening and only wants more of the same: they **revel** in the world as they see it. Another sort, the majority and the largest group by far, feels that with just a few more judiciously placed *band-aids*: a few more laws, a few more petitions or demonstrations, or another government program; we will solve all of our problems, get back on the growth machine that has fueled our luxuriant lifestyle, and everything will be rosy from then on. They believe we only have to **revise** our society to solve our problems. Then there is the last sort, and I suspect that since you are still reading this book you are in this group. We feel that the system is built on a rotten foundation; likely you join me in naming genocide, patriarchy, and exploitation as three of the worst parts that must be cleansed before we will have any hope of creating a new, just, fulfilling, and sustainable society. We believe that **revolt** is the only answer. We seek changes in the paradigm that are pronounced *impossible* by the ruling class and the elites serving its interests; changes that actively undermine the functions the elites perform, and that call into question the naturalness and inevitability of those *truly transient* functions.

We who are reading this book are not in the majority, although we share many of their characteristics:

- Deeply compromised by debt
- Disillusioned
- Distracted
- Exhausted
- Apathetic: been there, done that
- Disorganized

These are aspects affecting most people in our culture today that we have to bear in mind as we make our plans and decisions.

We face entrenched systems where people are interchangeable, and likely soon expendable (if not already). Moral suasion works for small groups of reasonable, moral people, but not against larger groups or deeply entrenched power. If you are nonviolent then this culture must motivate you to revolt. Our goal is dismantling, not morally navigating. Morality alone will not be successful; expecting that it will is what has allowed the Beast to grow so deeply embedded in our culture. The structure must fundamentally change. This is not a single-issue problem: it is not enough to blame the exponential growth of population, or just the runaway for-profit corporations, or the bought-and-paid for politicians. For example, we have enough food for everyone; what we lack is a way to distribute that food *to* everyone. But solving food distribution doesn't address the plastic gyres in the oceans, nor the endemic fraud in finance, nor the spreading radioactive plume from Fukushima, nor does it provide shelter to a homeless person in the bitter winter's cold of Minnesota. We face issues arising from overshoot, upper limits, and diminishing returns. Any solution that actually works must be fundamentally new, not just a tweak of the old. And human beings, so good at denial, will likely require a collapse before they will even allow a discussion of this problem; thus revolt is not a coup in which we attempt to take over, rather it is an attempt to bring about the collapse faster so that we can conserve as many resources for our rebuilding efforts as we can.

Every decision matters, as we see in this quote from "*If Your House Is On Fire*" by Kathleen Dean Moore:

"It's ironic and tragic that the amassing of material wealth in the name of our children's

future is precisely what will devastate their future. Consider the poisonous chemicals in their plastic car seat, the pesticide on the fruit we feed them, the coal-company stock in their college-investment portfolio, the carbon load of driving them to their soccer tournament. But that's not the worst of it. The harm that our decisions will do to the children who are not privileged isn't just ironic; it's reprehensible. These children who will never know even the short-term benefits of misusing fossil fuels are the ones who will suffer the most as seas levels rise, as fires scorch croplands, as tropical diseases spread north, as famine comes to lands that were once abundant."

This is the most serious of questions. Choosing cooperation over competition isn't like deciding caffeinated or decaffeinated, it is a philosophical vector that shoots you down a very different life path. When it's **your life** vs. **your morals**, what will you decide? What will it take: ideas, actions, decisions, love and support, forgiveness maybe; **to help to bring your life and your morals into alignment?**

I want to acknowledge that part of what holds us back, part of what keeps us living the small, safe life, is our fear. Anyone can succeed at easy tasks, can live the comfortable life. Fear prevents change. Each of us has fear of a different flavor, but for activists it might be a fear of what could happen as the police state brings its weight to bear on us: prison. A character in a play by Ignazio Silone says, "*If your soul is at peace and without remorse, prison can even be a pleasant place for a rest. Fear of prison is a trick invented by the authorities to demoralize good Christians. Many acts of cowardice in fact, are excused by the fear of ending [up] in prison.*" Let us taste the fear, and work with it, but not be frozen into inaction by it. Let it lend caution

and preparation to what we do, but if we let fear immobilize us, they have won without lifting a finger against us. Can we overcome our fear and come to see our cultural rebirth is one fantastic possibility arising from our adversity?

So how are we to carry on this struggle? How can we bring about the changes we need to make this a sustainable world, one that we can proudly pass on to our childrens' childrens' children? What follows are three approaches: stepping out (withdrawal from playing the system's games), passive resistance, and active resistance. I refuse to give in to despair as some writers have; it is difficult to carry the knowledge of what is happening and yet continue to fight. This skill is truly the sign of someone who is capable of modeling the behaviors, the way of being, that will see us out of this morass: one who can hold both the truth of what is happening and the possibility of extinction that implies, while calmly holding space for the change and evolution that will lead us into the world our hearts know is possible. I know what it feels like to give up the struggle and acknowledge that someone I dearly love has died, and that I failed to save them. I will not give up again.

Stepping Out Of The Way

“How do we live if there are no known remedies? Are there changes we are being called to make whether or not we know in advance whether anything will make a difference? What might it mean to give up life as usual to actively face and meet these grief times? How do we shift, if we don't know what to do? At least for this moment, let us agree. Let us not live life as usual. Let us not live business as usual. Let us not allow life, our lives,

to be beholden to commercially designed, media driven,
technologically determined life style.”

Deena Metzger

Empire knows we will not resist: how could we, when we need to hurry home to watch “Dancing with the Stars”? Even as our lives crumble due to unemployment or medical bills, we don’t question how things are done. Do you truly believe that supply and demand are what set the price of gasoline? Don’t you question how it is that oil companies not only make the most profit of any business sector in history, but also seem to be one of the worst polluters? How long will we pay through our nose for the privilege of being poisoned?

Stepping Out refers to withdrawing your energy, your resources, and your agreement from the powerful system that currently runs our world. It’s stepping out of Wall Street and back onto Main Street. It is simple and happens unnoticed, really. We know that when materialistic values go down, pro-social values go up. If you want to feel more motivation to connect with your neighbors, stop buying stuff. How can we maximize our chance of successfully resisting the siren’s call to buy? We tend to focus on material things when we feel insecure. Instead of buying a movie to watch at home alone, share a movie night with friends: wear pajamas, drink hot cocoa and eat cookies, and most importantly, laugh together! Watch a movie that someone already has or that you can access free online, rather than buying a new one! And when the movie is over, discuss among yourselves the ways in which that particular movie was serving up propaganda about how we should be acting, how we should be feeling about ourselves, and in what ways, if any, you feel diminished in your power to recognize your inherent goodness or ability to make a difference because of messages you picked up in the

subtext or context of the movie. This is actually a nice exercise to use any time you are exposed to mass media.

Here are some ways that you and I and everyone we know can make huge contributions to shifting the shared values that promote economic imbalance. You can think of more ways like these, I'm sure, to step out of the mainstream narrative and begin doing only what **feels right**:

- Practice gratitude. Focus on all the good things in your life, particularly the ones you did not have to pay for. Give plenty of value to friendship, laughter, good health, almost no value to anything you have to purchase. Don't worry, weighing it like that will feel great!
- Practice generosity. Be an example of giving stuff away. Even give until it hurts occasionally.
- Unplug from the celebrity myth. If you are tempted to read *People Magazine* or watch a show like *Judge Judy* or *Celebrity Crib*, think about focusing your energy and attention on a good – or a new – friend instead.
- Get in the habit of talking about amassing huge wealth **as a social disease**. No need to be judgmental, you can speak of it with compassion. The rich have problems like drug and physical abuse, divorce, overspending, and toilets that back up, too.
- Use your conversations, at work or at home, to help discover our **shared values**. Values drive everything we do. Ask the people close to you “*What is your deepest longing?*” or “*What values drive your life?*”
- Stop running from (y)our problems. We cannot run from something forever; and believe it or not, the longer we run from something the more

difficult it becomes to face. The longer we wait to change how money works, or to end our dependence on burning stuff for energy, or to reduce our need for chemically enhanced or even created food, the more difficult the change becomes, and the farther we have to fall when the system collapses. The longer we deny our complicity in perpetuating the system, the more it hurts when reality forces us to see what we have wrought. The longer we wait to confront a relationship that is hurtful or controlling, the higher the price of repentance. Challenges arise for a reason: to teach us through experience. As difficult as they can be to both face and overcome they always give us an opening in which we can become stronger and more capable. There are also fewer things more liberating than the feeling of finally facing something that you had put off or had been afraid of for so long. **Big Secret: it is rarely if ever, as bad as you have imagined**, once you finally address the problem.

- Stop lying: to yourself and to others. What starts as a *simple or small* lie (possibly even with the *good* intention of not hurting someone) quickly spirals into an entirely false reality where the biggest impediment to sharing the truth is our desire to avoid earning a reputation as a liar. We lie to one another, but even more so we lie to ourselves; most often just to protect our fragile ego. The past has helped to make you who you are but it does not define you: you always have the ability to fully honest. You will be pleasantly surprised by **how much lighter an honest existence can be**, and how much easier it becomes to just be present.

- Understand that the biggest enemy of the perfect is the good. We don't need a perfect plan before we begin; we can learn to listen to the small inner voice and lean into what is available for us to do or not do in this moment. We all know we learn from our mistakes but we also know from experience that we learn so much more when we step outside of our comfort zone and do something different or new. Besides, not only is our idea of perfect most likely heavily shaped by entertainment and popular media but it is also always changing and therefore nigh impossible to ever be met.
- Stop judging yourself or comparing yourself to others. Many of us have a seemingly-natural tendency to compare ourselves or our circumstance to that of another. When we value good over bad, two things happen: first, we suffer when we judge our situation or a particular outcome to be *bad*; and second, we worry that we will lose the *good* outcome or situation once we have it. This tendency is insidious and causes us problems when we are not aware of it: think of how many times you may have said, vocally or not, *it must be nice* when looking at a facet of another person's life. There's a famous saying: *the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence*. The moment we stop comparing and instead focus on our own experience, it is likely that we will find peace in things being the way that they are. Another aspect of judging: when we judge ourselves poorly, we often try to get others to feel sorry for us. No one likes to be around someone who is always complaining, and by focusing on the *bad*, we increase our own

suffering too. Accept whatever it is that seems to be plaguing you and choose to move on from it rather than dwell on the stories or in the emotions that could be made from it. And one more aspect: we all want to be seen as capable; and when we judge a situation or outcome to be *bad* we often blame others and totally ignore the part we had in creating that outcome. The problem is that deep down we know the truth; we can't lie to ourselves, not really. Owning our part in everything that goes on can mean the difference between learning our lesson once and for all, and repeating the same outcome over and over again.

- Stop letting the past define how you think of others. Let go of the resentments and blame; forgive! Forgiveness is really about clarifying your own point of view, cleaning your own windshield so that you can again see what lies ahead of you on its own merits, **not tinted by your own perception or story of what happened.** Think of how much you have changed and grown throughout your life, and allow others to change as well. Often you find, if you bring up the issue for discussion in an attempt to *clear the air*, that you are the only one who remembers the alleged *disrespect*. Trust that they meant well, that they didn't know all of the facts, that ultimately they love you and can't imagine ever hurting you, and that now they think of themselves only as your friend. Put down the sack of blame and lightly move on.

If we are willing to learn from our forebears' diets and activities, what wisdom can we garner about how they managed to survive and evolve over tens of thousands of

years without technology⁸³? We might find that true wealth and value resides in these aspects of life in community with nature and other beings:

- **Take Responsibility** Taking responsibility obliges us to scrutinize our own complicity in our life's difficulties, in the bad decisions, in the less-than-ideal circumstances. When we think about our health, our professional lives, our relationships or any other area where grievances live, what have we done, or are we doing, to perpetuate a miserable pattern? How have we conspired with the negative influences to get us where we're at? Why do we continue to accept situations that genuinely don't work for us? This isn't about beating ourselves up or lowering our self-esteem in unloving ways; but it is about taking, as the 12-step programs define in Step 4, a **fearless moral inventory** of our behaviors. Taking responsibility doesn't mean forgetting the past or denying any awareness of the difficulties we've faced. It's more a question of owning our lives, for all their mixed circumstances. We put ourselves in right orientation with our responsibility by taking what's ours and, just as importantly, giving back what's not ours: letting others have the dignity as well as consequences of their own responsibility.
- **Take Care of Yourself** If you ran your health into the ground in evolutionary times, you put yourself and your family or tribe at risk. What was the possible benefit? To remain effective we must work hard to ensure our continued well-being. When we are nourished and sustained

⁸³ Adapted from Mark Sisson's, "*The Primal Connection*"

today, we have more to offer to those around us and to our futures.

- **Cultivate Deep Relationships** Today we can go through our adult lives with few, if any, intimate relationships: the kind of connections that feel like kin or our own tribe. You know the type: you've seen each other through transitions, successes, and disappointments. You have history and your own stories and *inside jokes*. You can finish each other's sentences. **The fact is, we haven't outgrown or evolved away our need for kin.** We live with the same genes that benefited from social connection and still have the same biochemistry that rewards it. With frequent relocations and busy lives, connecting gets complicated. Too many of us end up socially adrift. If you find yourself at this point in your life without a core group, build one. **No excuses, get started.** Feed this aspect by first deepening the relationships you already have. When you begin seeing your partner, family members, kids, and closer friends as your tribe, you gain a whole new level of appreciation for the role they play in your life. Reconnect with old friends, and test the waters to see if there's potential there to become close again. Get out into the world, meet people, and make an invitation: invite a coworker for lunch, join a book group or a basketball league. Host an open house for the neighbors, maybe as a prelude to starting a neighborhood association. **Over time, cultivate those relationships that seem most genuine and promising.**
- **Be Present** For our ancestors, life was an exercise in continual hyper-vigilance. Not every

second, but close. It wasn't just the risk of becoming another creature's dinner: attentiveness also meant watching for changes in the weather, catching migratory patterns, or smelling nearby water or salt or berries, just to name a few examples. ***Being* is to be found in giving this moment your full attention.** It's about minding the difference between thoughtful deliberation or reflection and the chatter of our ego, or so-called monkey brain. It's about throwing off the self-absorption we trap ourselves in every day when we pass time with our phones or with our mental chatter. Experience the people, places, and possibilities that are right in front of you, waiting to be appreciated. Go on a walk and don't turn back until you have found at least a dozen things you've never noticed before. Slip on a bracelet, and throughout the day as you become aware of it dangling from your arm, remember to come down from the mental busyness and become aware once again of the experiences in this moment.

- **Forgive** For our ancestors, life was about conservation: of energy, of resources, of good will. In a cost-benefit analysis, **nursing an unrelenting grudge would've been a major liability.** If you couldn't get along with the group, eventually you likely wouldn't have been welcome anymore. Although stewing and nauseum today usually doesn't present the critical threat of banishment, we still wallow in supposed **wrongs** far too much. How much of ourselves do we tie up in the binds of past offenses or travails? How long will we allow ourselves to be stuck, and what are we missing

out on in that time? At what point is it not even about the original sin anymore but our own circuitous, self-sustaining upset? **This is true: each day we let a past hurt, disappointment, or mistake determine our wellbeing, that is a day we miss living the full measure of our potential for happiness.**

- **Make New Spears** For our ancestors' part, they didn't have the luxury of donning a single hat, limiting themselves to a specific function within the group. Everybody contributed something to just about every endeavor. In a band of 30-40 people, you wouldn't want to turn over an essential function to a single person who at any time might be dragged away by a pack of wolves. **A resistance to specializing probably has some ingrained wisdom and evolutionary merit.** Whatever stage of the game you're at, make an investment in yourself. Pursue a new career that aligns more with your passion. Delve into a hobby that gives you genuine pleasure. Learn a skill that will help your neighborhood if the power goes out for a long, long time. Resist the modern idea that life or professional success has to follow a linear track. Define your personal trajectory in terms of your own satisfaction and sense of self-development rather than an outside template. Learn something new every day. **Feed your curiosity.**
- **Be Happy With Enough** What does abundance mean to you? While we don't need to swear off the blessings of modern conveniences and novelty, it's important to define our most

deep-seated priorities. What genuinely nourishes you at the physical level? What fills out your intellectual, creative, social, emotional and spiritual dimensions, however you conceive of them? Too often we fill our lives with stuff because of a bloated and distorted sense of our basic needs. We think we need a 4,000 square foot house, to eat lobster a few times a month, and to buy every little knick knack sold at the local import store; all while depriving ourselves of the aspects of life that provide us with real wealth: genuine and close friends, time and outlets for self-expression and development, *enough of what we need*. **The fact is, our basic needs are simpler than we think, and our other, more nuanced needs as described on this list are more essential than we think.** Be bold enough to create a vision for your life, however counter it is to our culture's version of success or linear progression. Think about experience and satisfaction, about playing hard and sleeping well. There's where living abundantly begins.

- **Sharpen Your Saw** When we are caught in the web of *not enough*, we often get frantic, trying to do more and more in order to somehow do enough. Here is a story that illustrates this:

There was a contest between two men, to see who could cut down the most trees with a saw in 24 hours. The first man, determined to win, set to work as the contest began, and diligently and continuously worked his saw and cut trees. The second man, after about an hour of work, stopped to rest and sharpen his saw. The first man, seeing this,

redoubled his efforts, taking advantage of the other man not working, and quickly gained the lead. As the day progressed, the second man continued to take breaks and to sharpen his saw, and though he was cutting trees for fewer minutes, he began to overcome the lead the first man had gained early in the contest. The first man, seeing this, became more and more desperate, but refused to stop even for a moment. After the contest had ended, with the second man winning, the exhausted loser asked incredulously about how the other man had won, having taken so many breaks. “It’s important that you rest and sharpen your saw”, he replied.

This story points out a very important truth: we must take time to be still, to rest, to sharpen our saw, if we are to have the energy and tools we need to be effective. With this in mind, consider taking a day each week to unplug from the electronic world that drives so many of us to distraction: refuse to check email, leave the TV off, don’t surf the Internet or use Instant Messaging, and even refrain from answering the phone. It is surprising how much time and energy these tools of modern living take from us without our realizing what is happening. Taking this break opens us to reconnect with what feeds us: strolling in the park, immersing ourselves in Nature at the beach or in the mountains, or blissing out in our garden or with friends and family. Getting outside, into the Nature that we come from and that we will inevitably return to, reminds me that I am not my problems, I am not

the four walls I enclose myself in; rather **I am this infinite vastness**. Eventually, you can expand this notion of a Sabbath, or a day of rest, to include spending the day without using electricity or oil.

We may need to concentrate on taking care of ourselves first, and people in other countries later. Just because an area of the world is *impoverished*, and the typical poverty line we invoke is making less than US\$2 per day, it is not a fact that the people who live in these conditions have a lower quality (or even length!) of life than someone making US\$50,000 in America. Usually, everyone eats, although maybe not what we would call *sufficient*. Usually everyone has shelter, although not an individual bedroom. And sadly, more American babies die in their first year of life than in nearly half of the nations around the world, including some that the Americans would label *impoverished*. What else might we have wrong in our thinking about how the world works? For instance, if we believe that by bringing new markets to the countryside we are giving poor people an opportunity to trade for more or better goods, we must also acknowledge that we introduce new risks that they may be ill-equipped to handle. We might think that giving someone a cow will help them by providing milk and meat that they can sell. They may not know how to care for a cow, if cows are not part of their food culture already. They may not know how to cook with milk, or they may not enjoy drinking it as much as Americans do. And cows may divert too much grain or grass away from the animals that the natives **do incorporate** into their diet. Currently if their market-based food source gets too

expensive, they revert to subsistence gathering/farming and disconnect from the economy altogether. They would show up as one more person who is not making *enough*, regardless of how satisfied their hunger may be. Remember, the more embedded one becomes in markets; the more enamored one becomes of money. In other words, the harder it is for them to return to the *old ways* in order to save themselves. Just look at how hard it would be for you to feed, clothe, and shelter yourself if the local stores were unable to restock their shelves due to a gas crisis...and how stressed you would be not having any money in the bank during a banking collapse, whether there was anything being produced that you could *buy* or not.

There is **enough food**; we have a distribution problem, not an agricultural one. Money, chemistry, class, and oil are all reasons why we have hunger, not a lack of farmers or a lack of produce. Ban GMOs⁸⁴, yesterday. GMOs are not economically sound; farmer suicides in India. Independent studies repeatedly show that GMO farming is no more economical than organic, and usually has less yield per acre. Biofuels were mandated by Bush 43 when corn exports dropped to near-zero because Europe would not accept GMO crops (imagine this: they have labeling laws! And they want tests that prove GMOs are safe before they will allow them to be eaten!) We see an increase in resistance among many pests to glyphosate (Roundup) and farmers must apply larger doses, or use *traditional* labor-intensive weeding techniques, just like before our magical chemical *solution*. Glyphosate kills insects

⁸⁴ Genetically Modified Organisms, which include plants and animals, but refer mainly to plants that are used as food for humans or livestock in this section.

but not mammals? Really? It creates *leaky gut*, which at small doses makes a body more allergic to what it eats, and at higher doses causes death. It doesn't seem logical to think that it only affects *one kind of intestine*. It is a scam pure and simple... a money-making scheme concocted by and for billion-dollar corporations. It's about chemical companies selling chemicals.

Monsanto's goal is to leave no fertile, natural seed stock **anywhere in the world**. Whistleblowers pay a high price and routinely, investigators are reined in, told to get back on message, by their employers who benefit from perpetuating the scam. No researchers in universities funded by agricultural companies can get any grants for testing the effects of GMO foods on humans, so we are left to try to protect ourselves with very little actual knowledge about what is being grown. But here is information you can use. Avoid:

- Soy
- Corn
- Cottonseed
- Canola
- Sugar beets
- Papaya
- Zucchini
- Yellow crookneck squash
- Alfalfa (hay: beef)
- aspartame

The majority of the foods listed above are modified or carry toxic residues we can't avoid when eating. Buy Organic; buy products labeled *non-GMO*; look for non-GMO food guides. **Opt out** of the great GMO experiment.

Some dangerous, controlling thoughts we need to overcome if we are to effectively step out of this system of control:

- are those ideas that poison your mind or sap your will
- are lies that rewrite history
- are thoughts that distract you from the oppression under which you suffer
- are notions that plant desires, or create problems, you didn't know you had in order to sell you products you don't truly need using money you don't have
- are words that show you more ways in which you are inadequate according to standards set by others
- are those instructions that tell us all we need to do is *meet* our goals; or that we cannot *question* the goals our culture has set for us
- are those memes that allow us to continue to consume media and goods without questioning our own responsibility for the state of the world

As decentralization moves power from the center to the fringe, it will be resisted by the powers that be even to the point of violence if it moves too far and ends up beyond their control. For example, getting off the national grid using locally generated power means no money being paid to the utility companies; home gardens mean less industrial agriculture; biking or walking means we bypass a multinational oil company. Organic farmers serving produce to friends have been forbidden to do this unless they use a certified, inspected, kitchen. People are forbidden in many cities to serve even packaged, certified food to others who are unemployed within the boundaries of public parks or to

donate food to homeless shelters⁸⁵. It is becoming illegal around the country for people without homes to sleep in their cars. These are ways that oppression begins to manifest when we decentralize too much or try to take care of ourselves without paying into the corporate capitalist economy. And beware the common human error of ignoring the *creep* of systemic decay: **the system is eroding** in its ability to effectively help us. At some point it will pass the level of *acceptable* assistance; we usually don't know it has past that point until we look for help that will never arrive. Oops! We have to start up the new ways while the system is still relatively functional if we are to have the means to survive its collapse. Being useful to your neighbors increases the chance you will get help and be protected. Learn skills that are useful in a decentralized economy. What might this look like?

- Beginning to make things instead of buy them
- Learning to limit our waste and to repair broken items whenever possible
- Deciding to take no more *jobs* but to seek instead to barter our skills and surplus goods, accumulated over a lifetime of consumption but no longer used, for what we truly need
- Don't decide to buy something based on solely on the paper-money question *is it cheap?*: decide based on my own means, what value it offers to me, and what consequences arose while bringing

⁸⁵ A city council member near where I live in California said during a debate about a law to prevent serving food for free in a city park that "...feeding people like that encourages them to live outside."

it here that I will be supporting if I decide to purchase it

- Making goods from Nature in order to reconnect with where my things come from.
- Seeking real abundance, not phantom wealth
- Embracing disposability by making most products biodegradable, or return to only using *lifetime* tools that are repairable and upgradable?

Another way we can step out the system is to question those facets of modern life that are integral to its functioning, like meeting deadlines. Quoting Douglas Rushkoff author of *“Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now”*:

“[A post-clock era]...would unshackle us from this very time-based money that we’re using. Working less, making less, producing less. The mandate for efficiency of the industrial age is not to produce things more efficiently, but to produce more things over time... The industrial age was not about craftspeople trading peer-to-peer. You weren’t supposed to be a craftsman, you were supposed to be an employee. Take retirement; you hoard money now in order not to work when you get older because you are on your own. I don’t know of any other form of life that gathers up all the food it needs in the first two-thirds of life in order to do nothing in the last third... [Instead of hoarding] you’d be working to provide value for the people around you. As you got old, those people would naturally want to take care of you.”

There are many issues with capitalism; too many to detail here, but I would like to offer up a few aspects for discussion:

- Fraud drives out the good, moral businessperson; and fraud has become rampant in every large business⁸⁶. It is a way to maximize profit, and that has become the over-riding concern of our day: every decision is weighed not in the balance of equality or justice or sustainability or even happiness, but in how much money will it make **me**? Is fraud the result we want?
- We continue to experience diminishing returns: take oil from Alaska and the North Sea in the 1970s for one example. Finding new oil fields there fed dreams of U.S. energy independence, yet the Alaskan Field took a decade to bring fully online, and lasted really only about 20 years. It did manage to keep oil prices cheap during its run, however. Now we have new claims of energy independence coming because of the technique called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. The major oil companies followed minor players into buying up oil rights to millions of acres on the promise of long-term riches, yet the actual returns on these *investments* are so poor that the bigger companies have already begun to sell the properties and take huge losses. It turns out that these wells are **dry within 5 years**, and never produce enough to pay for operating costs at current product prices, let alone the large sums offered for the early leases. And all throughout the fracking *boom*, which is fading fast, oil prices have stayed above \$90 per

⁸⁶ And many small ones, too.

barrel⁸⁷. There are other downsides to fracking: just look at Barnhart Texas, where the town's water supply has run dry. It was used to frack in the Permian Basin: ranchers dumped most of their herds when the extra draw down, coupled with drought, made it impossible for local ranchers to feed and water their herds and besides, they were making money off of the royalties from the initial drilling. As the wells depleted after just a few years, those royalties have evaporated like water left out in the hot Texas sun. Because all the water went into the wells, cotton farmers lost up to half their crops. In a good year, local rancher Buck Owens used to run 500 cattle and up to 8,000 goats on his 7,689 leased hectares (19,000 acres). Now he's down to a few hundred goats because that's all the water he can rustle up. We are trading our clean water for poor quality oil we can't use here and a toxic sludge we can't drink: is that a good decision?

- In the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, there were lots of resources and no capital to invest upfront. Today it is reversed: we have lots of peak or declining amounts of resources and too much capital. That capital, mandated to seek profit by any means available, has turned to speculation, creating derivatives with no inherent or easily determined value, and high-risk deals in order to grow. Today we need a new paradigm not reliant upon large amounts of capital or consumption.

⁸⁷ Some estimates have placed the cost per barrel to extract shale oil at over \$500!

- Why do we value democracy in politics **but not in the workplace**?
- Can we begin looking at and discussing how it feels when promises are broken; in particular, governmental promises of care and retirement? It is likely that every promise made by the government of pension payments, Social Security benefits, or Medicare coverage will be broken soon. What are the implications of this, in your life and in our lives?

Remember our history lessons: eventually, **people found better things to do than obey feudal lords**. Perhaps the transition from capitalism to some new economic system will occur in a similar way. Or not. There is a changing of the guard in media, and a changing of the guard in dollars, it just hasn't managed to change how Big Business operates yet. Gen Y is now going to be the largest consuming cohort; people need to realize that what they want is not what Boomers wanted. They will eventually be the number one political cohort; and they are not afraid to go out in the streets and smash shit. This is not like the anti-war protests of the '60s and early '70s; this is like, "**let's fucking shut it down and start over...**"

When people lose faith that the government can take care of them, they also lose their fear that the government can hurt them. When soldiers aren't paid, do they fight their own people for free? Not enough to keep **everyone** down. Especially young people, who are paying the price of being educated yet unable to find work and are now burdened with huge debt even before their first job, have no fear that the government will hurt them. In America we don't know, or don't remember, the meaning of tanks in the streets, or of crowds or

individuals being fired upon by authorities, having only rarely seen that before⁸⁸. “*So what if the government fails; what good has it done me?*” is the new black. **Let the rebellion begin.**

Look at what is beginning to happen in Europe, a place where youth (under age 30) unemployment is at or above 50%: the young are leaving the country for *greener* pastures. What would you expect them to do; hang around to eventually begin to pay taxes to support their parents if once their parents retire? In France, with its population of 66 million, the labor participation rate (meaning the number of working age adults actually holding jobs) in the private sector is 17 million. That means that 17 million people pay the taxes to support the government’s services for 66 million, a 1 worker for every four people ratio. Add in government employees, and France still doesn’t reach 50% of its citizens having work. How is America any different, in our expectation that future workers will have to bear a larger burden to fund the retirements of their elders? And since we are mentioning Europe, it is typical for the media to *train us* to accuse the Europeans of profligate spending, especially when austerity, or cutting back government spending on employment and pensions, is touted as the only and best solution to budget deficits. Yet because there is a greater chance of default, the loans that Spain must take to finance their deficit may cost them, say, 6% while bonds for Germany, a less-likely default candidate, run at, say, 3%. Capitalism demands that if you want the best return on your money, you place it with Spain, thus giving the impression to Spain that it can just continue to borrow. Which comes first: the debt or the spending?

⁸⁸ Unless you remember Kent State, or Jackson State, or that police shooting in your neighborhood recently...

How can we beat debt at its own game? Withhold the energy (\$\$) that keeps the cycle going. Because money is created through debt, taking out a mortgage feeds the system. Conversely, paying off or defaulting on a loan destroys money. Do one or the other! Don't fear renting: it is paying someone else to take the risk of asset price fluctuations, which we know don't always increase. It also gives you flexibility and mobility; both useful tools in a collapsing economy. Always use cash not plastic⁸⁹. Using even a debit card forces the merchant to pay 3% or more to banks for *facilitating the transaction*. In fact, fees are the biggest source of revenue for banks outside of their own, speculative trading. If we withhold our dollars by using cash, we can hurt the beast. Bonus: if you shop at a locally-owned business, which I hope you already do habitually, then that 3% goes straight to your friend's bottom line, and not to the faraway national or global conglomerate that cares not a whit about your community. Hey, we've all been the victims of a giant swindle and fraud, perpetrated by the banks with the help of government and media propagandists. **Let's step away from the buffet and refuse to play anymore.** Don't pay back your loans, all of them. Let them deal with a massive rebellion. Consider supporting the *Rolling Jubilee*: created by Occupy Wall Street after the camp was closed in late-2011, RJ collects donations then uses the money to buy distressed medical debt. Once a hospital or doctor decides they will never be paid the debt, they sell it to debt-collectors. I know you've heard the horror stories of people being driven to suicide or homelessness by these fiends who scavenge for a *living*. What is sad is that they pay 2-10% to the hospital to get the debt, so very few debtors

⁸⁹ See the last section of this book, "Inspiration" for the piece titled, "Paper or Plastic?"

actually have to repay for them to make money. Of course, the collection business is full of fraud and deception and oppression of those without access to resources. Once RJ has purchased someone's debt, they send the person a letter absolving them of the debt: they make it vanish!

And before we move on, I want to bring one more thought about debt to the surface: this culture has done a superb job of limiting our discussions on this subject. None of us, myself included, feel at ease talking about our own difficulties with money and debt. This keeps us, in the mode of divide-and-conquer, feeling isolated and alone at a time when we would benefit from understanding that **everyone has debt problems**. Rolling Jubilee is more about opening the discussion about a broader debt forgiveness plan than it is about relieving a few people of their debt. When we share that we have defaulted on credit cards, student loans, or mortgages, that we have chosen to buy food for our children rather than pay the utility bill, or that we missed a few mortgage payments just so we could get a loan modification; these are the ways we begin to see the broader issues of debt enslavement, and to find support for actions that can really hurt the banks who profit from this system. Can we begin to connect and share our experiences, please? David Graeber writes, "*My line has always been that the RJ is a way of **providing mutual aid for those already engaged in civil disobedience** against finance capital (by defaulting).*" Let's support each other!

We can't stay in denial: "Everything will be OK, tech will solve it, we'll pass a law against that, the free hand will turn around the market..." Things will change, would you like to have a say in how they change? But once we become aware that things are bad, and that since the same people remain in charge things are only

getting worse, our real challenge becomes discovering what to do about it. Note, not what to *say* about it, what to *believe* about it what to *blog*, *tweet*, or *write* about it; rather, what **action** do you take? How do you live differently today, **now that you know**? How long will you let interest payments on debt transfer wealth to those with assets from those without? But this means we have to replace the people currently in authority and power. Until we have our hands on the levers of power, change will be left to chance or chaos.

Withdrawing from the system means expecting no more **bank credit**, expecting no more **social security**, expecting no more TSA or moon shots, refusing to pay for war, demanding accountability from banks and police and insurance companies; these are our only options, at least until corporations no longer **own** government. Take away your time, resources, energy, money, intelligence, cooperation, even any relationship with the system as it is designed: designed to transfer wealth from the many to the few.

Passive

We Americans, who grew up drinking deeply from the well of freedom that **we did not dig**, can't seem to find the will to repair the rope that lifts the cool water to our lips. We know what has to happen; we lack the desire or the incentive to make it so. We have amnesia and forget that a beat-down, servile, and obedient nation will always produce tyrants. By withdrawing your compliance and your dollars, you can begin to resist the oppression. Do not think that marching and petitioning will overcome their violence and oppression. **When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty.** Until we replace this system, we have to stop meekly complaining about the loss of our rights and start paying attention to taking care of our responsibilities by speaking out, of course, but more by withholding our support, our dollars, and our complicity in the oppression of other humans and Nature. We must use the tools the system provides to raise awareness and make what change we can. So what might that look like? This section offers some ideas that may spark actions you can take.

It might begin with this: because cooperation, not competition, feels so good, we can acknowledge ways that it is already enriching our lives. In his book "*The Penguin and the Leviathan*", Harvard University Professor Yochai Benkler draws on cutting-edge findings from neuroscience, economics, sociology, evolutionary biology, political science, and a wealth of real world examples to show that we can harness the power of human cooperation to improve business processes, design smarter technology, reform our economic systems, maximize *volunteer* contributions to science,

reduce crime, improve the efficacy of civic movements, and more. Here are a few of his examples:

- By building on countless voluntary contributions, open-source software communities have developed some of the most important infrastructure on which the World Wide Web runs. Open source software also helps you ensure that the browser you use doesn't have a backdoor accessible by government agencies, since the code is open for all to see.
- Experiments with pay-as-you-wish pricing in the music industry reveal that fans will voluntarily pay far more for their favorite music than economic models would ever predict.
- Many self-regulating communities, from the lobster fishermen of Maine to farmers in Spain, live within self-regulating system for sharing and allocating communal resources.
- Despite recent setbacks, Toyota's collaborative shop-floor, supply chain, and management structure contributed to its meteoric rise above its American counterparts for over a quarter century.
- Police precincts across the nation have managed to reduce crime in tough neighborhoods through collaborative, trust-based, community partnerships.

I will add some of my own:

- Restaurants offer several models of cooperation, including those that don't have prices but ask that you pay what you can and what you feel represents the value you have received, others ask that you pay only for the next person's meal. I've heard of a coffee shop that collects money for *suspended* coffees: you pay for more coffees than you take, and those that are paid for are

saved for anyone without funds who could use a warm beverage on a cold morning, such as an unemployed or homeless person. Recent reports point to a *pay next* phenomenon in drive-thrus where people pay for the car behind them too. The reported record is 245 straight vehicles paying for the person that follows them...

- Crowd funding
- Neighborhood associations

Lidy Pelsser has done studies with youngsters who suffer with ADHD by restricting their food to a very small bland diet for two weeks, then gradually reintroducing *normal* food. In more than half the cases, the two weeks-worth of bland food eliminates the ADHD symptoms. As another food is re-introduced every few days, when symptoms re-appear it would make sense that there might be link. Over 60% of the children in the studies, over several years, have been able to get off medication and live symptom-free by banning just a few foods from their diet.

The Dutch National Institute for Public Health, while recommending further research into these findings, recently suggested that “there must be a placebo effect involved”. After all, children, parents, and doctors could influence the results because they knew about the dietary restrictions, and the concept at work in the study (that food contributes to the symptoms). Only in a truly double blind study could the results be trusted, they said. Why the focus on *proving* that the physical effect, not the mental one, is the most important, or even that it is the only *true* solution? Does this fear that a placebo effect is what has cured the child get in the way of celebrating a cure? And what does this tell us about our medical system’s dependence upon drugs to cure us, our lack of understanding of our mind-body connection, and

the massive rates of misdiagnosis that are occurring under our current *cut-or-drug* paradigm? **Watch what you eat; it might be hurting you.** I'm serious: keep a journal and compare what you eat with how you feel soon after; you might be surprised by what you discover!

When we *deposit* money in the bank, we are actually giving the bank a loan. That explains why the bank pays interest, even if it is but a pittance. But also, by definition, we depositors are the last people in line to get our money back if the bank runs short of funds; this explains the *bail-in* concept, where as in Cyprus there can be a *tax* levied on deposits to provide the bank with liquidity, or as in Poland where all government bonds held within your pension or stock account can be confiscated and made worthless without recompense⁹⁰, again in order to provide some banking entity with the funds it needs to continue the banking scam. As long as we continue to give our money to banks we fund our own enslavement through debt, since they use our deposits as their reserves and leverage them to make more loans out of money conjured from thin air at a rate from 10:1 all the way to 50:1 or more. Allowing the Patriot Act and the National Defense Authorization Act to take away our constitutional rights places us in the same predicament: we braid the rope that our government will use to hang us all at some future crisis point. Starve the beast with your non-compliance; cutting off the head will, like a Hydra from the early myths, only make room for another head to grow. Changing regulations is not the answer!

Pick demands that are dignified, just, disciplined, and humble. Always choose the high moral road: that way

⁹⁰ This was done in September 2013

opponents have to at least have an answer, they cannot just ignore you or dismiss your demands. Too often today, we are haphazard in our work trying to change the world. We need to learn how to aim, and not always shoot from the hip. **Community Organizing is a skill: it is not ideology-dependent.** You can use it for any conversation where you want buy-in, either to an action you are planning, or an action the other person feels passionately about. Here is a step-by-step process to use when trying to agitate or organize someone through conversation. Remember, ***conversation is what moves people:***

- **Introduce** yourself, your name and who you represent
- **Ask open-ended questions** throughout the process: questions that can lead to agitation. Find out who they are and what worries them. “*What would you like to see changed?*” Try to identify their issue quickly. Understand **why** they have this as their issue. Listen, and build this relationship.
- **Agitation:** to get them angry, you should be angry too. Now that you know what is bothering them, empathize and express your feelings in the matter; give them the space to feel it with you. Tie everything back to their issue for the rest of the conversation. Be blunt, explicit. It’s OK to show anger, just not at the person you are speaking with!
- **Plan to Win:** give them hope. “*You have a chance to change this by joining with others...*” Why will this action help them directly? If you can tie this to your issue, great. If not, just

continue to agitate and plan so that they will **take some action.**

- **Inoculation:** “*What do you think will happen if you do this?*” Find out what stops them from taking action. Discover what risks they face: see their fear and help them see how they can guard against what they fear. What if nothing changes? What does the world look like then? Be sure they know what to expect; if they don’t plan ahead, the first obstacle they encounter will cause them to quit and go home.
- **Frame their choice:** “*Let the boss continue to pay you shitty wages, or stand with your co-workers to get for fair wages*”. Re-agitate, bring it back to their issue. Describe Heaven and Hell: “*You can remain alone in this and lose your place to live and be out on the street because nothing changes, or you can bring your family and neighbors and stand together and get this decision about reducing housing subsidies reversed.*” Bring them back to anger because no one acts out of fear, they act out of anger.
- **Call the question:** Get commitment; “*Can our community count on you to stand with us? Strike with us? March with us?*” *I’ll try* or *maybe* is a ***NO***; go back to open-ended questions and **start over**. How can we make this work for both of us?
- **Assignment:** Agree on particular tasks or next steps to be taken. Baby steps; easy first tasks or targets so that they succeed. *Contact 2 or 3 particular people*. Not, “*Can you talk to someone?*” rather, “**Who** will you talk to?” Yes

or no will always be no. Coach them about how to have the conversation; literally ask them, “*What will you say to him when you see him tonight at 6?*”

- **Follow-up:** Agree on how you will connect to track progress; collect contact info; then be sure you complete your tasks. Don't let it go long before connecting again: less than 24 hours. Procrastination is deadly; they will often side with the last person they talk to, keep them on your side by staying in contact.
- **Debriefing:** As part of your follow-up, explore what happened, details, both good and bad. Praise as appropriate, mentor to help avoid any of the same problems next time. Remember, no *thank you*; you want them to be doing this for **their reasons** not yours. Focus on coaching. Re-visit their hot button, re-inoculate. Use tone to your advantage: gossip, something that is a *secret* and said in a whisper, will spread faster than average conversation.

As you proceed through the process (inform, agitate, plan to win, inoculate, frame the choice), if they try to take over the direction of the conversation, or if they ask you a question that initially stumps you, this three-step process will not only take it back but open them up and get them to feel good about sharing with you:

Acknowledge: I know what you are feeling

Affirm: The reality now is this...

Redirect: So now we will do this....

These are some common mistakes:

- Don't **talk at** someone; if the issue is not important to the individual, you can't preach to them and be effective.

- Use questioning to find out what is important to them, not telling them info they don't care about. Avoid getting the person agitated about ***your*** issues, not ***theirs***.
- Don't assume you know what they are (or should be) concerned about; this is not about what we are interested in, it is about what affects the people we want to join with.
- Shoot from the hip and you will lose; have a plan based on understanding, and you will win.
- We may lose contact with those we are working with, and especially fail to use our database. Contact **is not sending emails**: face-to-face visits are best, phone calls next best.
- Failure to build or maintain a base of support.
- Focusing on what you will say next instead of ***listening*** to what they are telling you. This is the heart of organizing; recognizing that any action will ultimately help, and allowing each individual to make a difference about what they are passionate about. An organizer is an agitator; don't get frustrated when people take actions that have nothing to do with your own issue!

And here are some *dos and don'ts*:

- *Information* is not important. A request for information means they are unconvinced, and they won't spend the time to read your data anyway. People act because of emotion, not data.
- No *Thank You*; they aren't doing you any favor. Say *good job* of *great* but don't leave the impression they are helping you; they do it for themselves.

- Control the Conversation: don't get derailed, off into the weeds, stay on point, **redirect** when necessary.
- **Always model body language**: match their voice and posture, then you can begin to get them to match you. When they do, open up your body language so they will open to you. When they are agitated, be agitated. Then you can redirect your target onto tasks.
- Don't rely on flyers or email; it's too impersonal. Can be useful **to start a conversation**, but the conversation is the goal, not getting thousands of flyers distributed. They are *tools to meet people, not a resource to waste*.
- Create a database of people who share your concerns. Keep it current by using it! Include information gleaned during your conversations about what is important to them.
- Understand that your power is dependent upon your numbers. Small group = small power. Politicians won't pay attention until you can deliver lots of votes.
- Get details of their commitment: "*You are going to call John at 6? I'll call you at 6:15 to see how that goes...*"
- Follow-up in less than 24 hours, do it the same day if possible.
- Hot buttons can include positive emotions as well as problems that make the person angry: for example, when speaking with a history teacher and by referring to **historic** frequently, you can get the teacher to see the **historic** aspect of the

steps he would be asked to take, something very important to him.

- Identify the leader in any group; gain the leader and you gain their followers too. Figure out who is talking to who. Know how many followers a leader can produce.
- If you need 40 people to attend a meeting on Saturday, you need to have 160 people say on Monday before that they will be there; the numbers will fade during the week. Call all 160 on Thursday and Friday to re-confirm; ask what time they will show up, not if they still plan to come.
- House visiting works for community organizing; it builds your database, as well as good relationships. Don't call ahead. Door-to-door works for surveying the community to develop your programs.
- Pay attention to coordinating your three primary activities:
 - Media (control your messaging, prep the speakers for your rally)
 - Outreach (organizing)
 - Research (maintain database) (logistics, donations also)
- In local politics (community organizing) assess the council or supervisors; reinforce supporters and target those who are undecided. Work the meeting as an organized group: come in together, dress in color, leave when finished, together. Use petitions (one signature per page makes a more impressive stack) to gather info for

our database; petitions may be effective at the local level in sufficient numbers.

- If your campaign involves voting, then voter turnout is a big issue you need a good get out the vote campaign. Contact supporters to determine when they plan to vote; follow-up to ensure they did. This lets you help overcome issues that prevent them from voting, like no day care, or no ride to the polling place. Try to have one person contacting and delivering about ten voters.

The mastery of organizing is to **treat this as a normal conversation**; let it flow, while sticking to the steps and using the tool smoothly. It takes practice!

Don't beat yourself up for making a *mistake*; learn the conversation method by using it, and practice the rap with others (role play) before you go out. As a group, do a round robin (where everyone gets a chance to practice in front of the group) so that we are all using the same messaging. You can organize any situation; and you will be organized by others too. In summary, numbers are critical so have a plan for assessing your work. This is how you track your needs and your effectiveness.

Remember: in communication, more is better. Your database is gold; treat it with respect, use it, and keep as much information in it as you can gather about your contacts. Art of conversation is the mechanism of organizing success. Flyers are tools not goals, and email and social media are ineffective to generate turnout. And finally, debriefs are critical to our improvement, to catching trends that need our reaction or that change our message. Organize!

“Advocates for change succeed with tactics that put the movement in a win-win situation and the power structure in lose-lose. These tactics are called

Paradox Actions. When Rosa Parks sat in the front of the bus she won. If she was allowed to violate Jim Crow segregation, she beat the law. If they arrested her, they created an opportunity for the movement to grow – and it did.” www.popularresistance.org

If we can't win by fighting, then we must out-think them. Here are some tools or ideas that might help:

- Accept reality, be open to what an opposing viewpoint can tell you about what is real
- Build Resilience, in your own life and that of your community
- Conserve your resources, time, money, supplies for the right use
- Be extravagant, by being generous and loving with your resources, time, and money: this is the right use!
- Skill-up, always be learning from every situation
- Pick your place within the new future while you still have a choice
- Join a time bank in order to work and share without needing money
- Invest in your local community
- Help build a safety net for those who need help today
- Measure *success* in terms that matter in our new future
- Help others whenever, wherever, and however possible

As a brainstorm starter, you can do much worse than using Dr. Gene Sharp's list of "198 Methods of

Nonviolent Action”⁹¹. **Let’s get creative and bring this sucker down!**

We have to note the reality of surveillance: everything you do online and on your phone, and even your phone itself, are *freebies* as far as the government watchers are concerned. You could not make your plans and opinions more known to the government by using a bullhorn on the steps of FBI headquarters. But having acknowledged that, there are tools and methods that may at least make them work a tiny bit to find out what they want to know about you. I want to repeat what I have written before: **trust but verify!** I present information here that may not be what you need, given your particular situation. Always do your own research and make decisions about what **you need to do** for your own safety. New revelations may make something here irrelevant or even dangerous. There are individuals and groups who are even more paranoid than I ever hope to be; they are working hard to circumvent the ubiquitous spying and wiretapping that has become the hallmark of our police state. They will devise new tools and techniques, so stay involved in monitoring the state-of-the-art in privacy tools. Now that the disclaimer is over, let’s look at some, and only some, of the many ways you can increase your privacy and still use your computers and smart phones:

- Whenever possible, use **open source software**. Open source means that anyone can modify the software, and this means that lots of people concerned about security will be combing through every line and the government will be

⁹¹ <http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations103a.html>

unable to *sneak* a monitoring package onto your device.

- Devise a **password scheme** and use it. Do not be like 20% of users who have their password set to 1111. Use numbers and special characters. Use different passwords for each site. Use something memorable, like a phrase or a book title, but write it backwards, or put numbers between the words; anything to be difficult to guess or just plain *common*. It's OK to use a password safe, but make the master password **especially obtuse**.
- Understand the vulnerabilities of your smart phone:
 - It pings a cell tower, and the GPS system, continuously. Some apps will do this **even when the phone is turned off** as long as the battery is still in the phone. If you don't want your movements tracked or recorded, leave the phone at home.
 - If you have WiFi turned on, it will also be pinging for a connection. Speaking of WiFi, if it is on other devices can *sniff* and find your device, and make a connection to your phone or *eavesdrop* on your activity. This listening includes logging your keystrokes when you enter a password, without you knowing it. **Do nothing important online while your WiFi is active.**
 - Place some attention on getting and updating **anti-virus and anti-spam**

software for your phone, just like you do with your computer!

- Many apps transmit your location continuously to who-knows-where. Another reason to leave the phone home.
- Many phones now have **other wireless communication methods**: Near Field Communication and Digital Living Network Alliance are two examples, meant to making transferring data easy for you and your friends and appliances. These transmissions are just another way someone could hijack for data, though.
- **Use encryption!** There are ways to encrypt phone calls and text messages that are virtually painless. Investigate them if you feel a need to 1) talk about stuff you would not want someone to hear, or 2) just want to eat up NSA resources by making them spend time decrypting your conversation about what to have for dinner tomorrow night.
- Use a pre-paid, or *throwaway* phone, just like in the movies. Be careful though: any phone made in America or specifically for American consumers has a unique ID and can still be traced. Get one from China though, and you can be truly anonymous.
- **Use encryption** on your computer for email. Also consider using a VPN; even with encryption, the messages get decrypted at various stops along the route and are subject to being stored

and used against you. The NSA famously has a node in the TOR system and thus is able to see and decrypt its traffic, making the use of TOR moot. In a VPN however, that won't occur.

- **Do. Not. Ever. Use. Internet. Explorer.**
And when you use Firefox or Chrome, search for security add-ons or extensions. There are a ton of them and they are constantly being created modified and updated. Use the ones that are appropriate for you, but use something!
- **Consider having three email accounts:** one for your family and close friends, one for everyone else (including newsletters and sites where you use an email as your username), and a third one that is **only for password resets**. This last one is a great way to foil hackers who might get access to one of your regular email accounts and then try to lock you out by resetting all of your passwords. They won't get the email needed to complete the reset, because it went to a different account.
- **Use Startpage as your search engine** or DuckDuckGo, or one of the others that protect your identity during your search. Startpage also offers a **proxy server** option that often lets you click through to the search result anonymously, so that even if Google gets served with a warrant, they can't point you out. Startpage uses Google as its underlying engine anyway, so you get similar results. DuckDuckGo uses Bing. Personally, I prefer Google to Microsoft. And don't **even** get me started on Apple...

- **Deeply understand this: you can never remove anything you post to social media.** In the future⁹², a job application might trigger a web search: do you really want your potential boss seeing that photo you posted on Facebook near the end of your bachelor party? Seemed hilarious at the time, I know. But alcohol and drugs make **bad judgment filters**... do you really want to have to change your name ten years from now?
- **Speaking of Facebook...** use Diaspora or EvolveSociety or Retrosahre instead. They don't *sell your eyes* like Facebook, and they let you retain the rights to your posts and photos and documents, unlike Facebook. Like open source, there are better ways than just being a FB moneymaker...
- **Consider learning how to set up your own mesh network!** You can use the WiFi on your laptop to **be your own internet**. Get three or four of your allies together and you can run your own 'net during the protest march, or at the rally.
- **When delete is not delete** Another computer principle: *delete* does not make that incriminating file go away. A good computer nerd can find it again. These files have been successfully introduced in court. There are ways to make things disappear; learn about them and use them if necessary, but know that ***Recycle Bin* is not one of them.**

⁹² *in the future*??? This is already happening, by the way...

- **Never trust someone else’s hardware** and this includes the library. Don’t think that using a *public* machine make you any safer.
- **Cloud computing: are you kidding me?**
‘Nuff said
- **Anytime you are outside act as if you are on camera.** You probably are! Closed Circuit, government surveillance, traffic cams, license plate readers... these are popping up everywhere.
- **Resources:** this list is far from complete and only meant to get you started:
 - SSD.EFF.ORG
 - SECURITYINABOX.ORG
 - WHISPERSYSTEMS.ORG
 - BASICINTERNETSECURITY.ORG
 - MOBILEACTIVE.ORG
 - RISEUP.NET

~~There is much more that could be said about surveillance, but again please do your own research. It may not be necessary to keep anything private; but then again, we cannot know who will one day decide that a particular video on YouTube is treasonous and loose the dogs of war on your house. Impossible you say? I hope you are right. But better safe than sorry...~~⁹³

⁹³ The crosshatching in this paragraph is a font that successfully foils automatic character readers. Search ZXX and you can download several styles, one of which might be useful. It leaves the words readable for us, not for a machine. Might be handy!

To summarize this section, stop thinking about how to get a few more dollars and ask yourself instead, “*How can I be a blessing to the world?*” Do you knowingly go back to a well that has been poisoned? Of course not; yet you go to national and international chain stores to shop, or to a Too Big To Fail bank to cash your check or charge you annual fees to hold your retirement account. Can make ourselves a promise? **Not one more lie, not one more debt, not one more death, not one more psychopath loose on the street...** Lift off your shade, your mask, and let your light shine bright for us all, please!

The Good Stuff: Active

Mere wishing never made anything so.

“When you cannot fight power, all you can do is fight each other.

In other words, why liberals always lose.”

John Trudell

Here is where we are in terms of conventional *protest*: today another environmental group is sponsoring a day of protest targeting the Keystone XL pipeline, a building project I would not like to see completed. However, it is worth reflecting on just how pointless their approach is. Nearly unanimously, the protesters have paid fiat money, or maybe borrowed using a credit card, to buy the poster board and markers for their signs, using up fossil energy in the manufacturing and sales processes. They carry their plastic water bottles, or maybe one made of steel, also manufactured using toxic practices. They nibble on energy bars, and drink energy drinks, in order to have the stamina to stay out on the picket line all day long. In this manner, we see that often our intent and our actions are at cross-purposes even on a personal level; we feed the corporate monsters and suck from the energy beasts even as **we protest their methods**. We claim to hate banks and financial products, yet use them while we try to shut down the very institutions we blame for our problems. And while these good-hearted folks are building a movement around stopping the Pipeline, if Obama rules that it can be finished, their movement dies as most of them can't *afford* long jail terms that would result from ever-more drastic protests.

We fight back with strategies and with relationships, with organizing and truth-telling. The power resides with the rich; they aren't just going to turn over a new leaf and begin supporting the least of us. Remember, our economy is a system steeped in *faith*: faith in money, faith that supplies will arrive in time, faith that paper and data bits have *value*. It is very vulnerable to a rapid, widespread contagion once a critical number of adherents lose their faith. This makes striking at and destroying debts and withdrawing from participation in the debt-based money, both clear repudiations of our belief in the system, a very useful tool. Keep in mind, it is impossible for the government to come right out and admit that *the economy is broken*, or that *we are insolvent*; collapse would be immediate and intense. Far better, for those who have the power, to hold onto that power and remain in denial until there is no longer any possibility of a savior rescuing us. This is why we are left with active resistance: to bring the system down despite our rulers' wishes, while there are still resources left with which to rebuild.

Many words have been written about the urgent need for far more drastic action than anything the big Green organizations propose, since after all most of them have corporate masters to appease. Many recent investigative reports detail how corporate money flows into environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and often corporate executives sit on the boards of the very organizations that seek concessions from Big Business. Here we see some of the reasons why the large groups have become ineffective; not only are they co-opted by the entities they are supposedly fighting, they also have become entrenched bureaucracies in their own right, with jobs, benefits, and retirement plans to support. They don't want the fight to end if it would put them *out of business*. **Their fight is one that**

centers on compromise while ensuring that the money still flows; both to the corporations who are the problem, and to the NGOs that claim to be the solution. The non-profit structure organizes mass dissent that could actually spur real revolution into a career-based organizing model, one in which dominating hierarchy is created and oppressive power-dynamics are replicated. Even in groups that purport to work for economic or social justice, those people with a relative amount of privilege rise to the top of that organization's hierarchy, often by funding their organization by soliciting contributions from wealthy funders and donors (successful capitalists) who are then able to pride themselves on their philanthropy, and who often advertise their largesse in hopes of attracting more profits. Non-profits do not threaten the status quo or disrupt and disturb the colonial-industrial-capitalist paradigm. If they did, you can bet the state would have already done away with them. Clearly, however, the way we have been doing things through this type of organizational structure is not working. Even the groups that claim to be working against big business and business-as-usual have been co-opted:

“Now it turns out that some green groups are literally part owners of the industry causing the crisis they are purportedly trying to solve. And the money the green groups have to play with is serious. The Nature Conservancy, for instance, has \$1.4 billion in publicly traded securities, and boasts that its piggybank is “among the 100 largest endowments in the country.” The Wildlife Conservation Society has a \$377 million endowment, while the endowment of the World Wildlife Fund-US (WWF-US) is worth \$195 million.

“Let me be absolutely clear: plenty of green groups have managed to avoid this mess. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Rainforest Action Network, and a host of smaller organizations like Oil Change International and the Climate Reality Project don’t have endowments and don’t invest in the stock market.” Naomi Klein

But the issue is really this:

“And thus we arrive at the fundamental contradiction which pervades "serious" Green Thinking about mitigating anthropogenic climate change. Put simply, companies like ExxonMobil are simply giving The People what they want. As Walt Kelly put it, we have met the enemy and he is us. If someone (presumably governments) forcibly takes away the energy which makes civilization possible, The People will become very pissed off because most everybody wants the same things—a good home, a good job, a secure and prosperous family, a good education, opportunity for social and material advancement, and all the rest.

“And what provides those things which everybody wants? Economic growth provides those things. When the economy is not growing, or not growing fast enough, and people are being left behind, as they have been (in America) since the early 1980s and especially since 2008, people will do whatever is required to get back to a situation where those good things are possible again. That desire is independent of whether they are likely to get those good things back, which almost certainly isn’t going to happen for other reasons...**When push comes to shove, The People will overwhelmingly side with**

ExxonMobil, not Greenpeace.” Dave Cohen
[emphasis added]

We are comfortable; and the comfortable don't want change. The sad thing is that change will always come: and if we are comfortable and lose that comfort before we are ready, then we truly suffer. And business is good among companies that claim to be trying to help the less fortunate: in 2013 the National Football League is selling *pink* merchandise, ostensibly to support Breast Cancer research. But, as with any time corporate-for-profit or even generally well-respected non-profit entities are involved, we can't be surprised at the outcome⁹⁴:

“The league uses the color on its jerseys and other apparel in an effort to raise money for breast cancer research, but according to the [Business Insider] report, the breakdown of how the money from sales of the apparel gets distributed is as follows: 50 percent to the retailer; 37.5 percent to the manufacturer; **8.1 percent to the American Cancer Society for research; 3.24 percent to the administration at the Society**; and 1.25 percent to the NFL.”

Again to Naomi Klein, who writes about the futility of **only protest**:

“Just knowing what is happening – just rejecting their story, saying to the politicians and bankers: “*No, **you** created this crisis, not us*” or “*No, **we're not broke**, it's just that you are hoarding all the money*” may be true but it's not enough. It's not even enough when you can

⁹⁴ Quote is from Sports Illustrated Wire, 16 October 2013

mobilize millions of people in the streets to shout “*We won’t pay for your crisis.*” Because let’s face it – we’ve seen massive mobilizations against austerity in Greece, Spain, Italy, France, Britain. We’ve occupied Wall Street and Bay Street and countless other streets. And yet the attacks keep coming. Some of the new movements that have emerged in recent years have staying power, but too many of them arrive, raise huge hopes [and usually money], and then seem to disappear or fizzle out. The reason is simple. We are trying to organize in the rubble of a 30-year war that has been waged on the collective sphere and workers’ rights. The young people in the streets are the children of that war. Even when there is mass resistance to an austerity agenda, and even when we understand how we got here, something is stopping us – collectively – from fully rejecting the neoliberal agenda. **And I think what it is is that we don’t fully believe that it’s possible to build something in its place.** For my generation and younger, deregulation, privatization and cutbacks is all we’ve ever known. We have little experience building or dreaming. Only defending.”

That any Native Peoples remain is a testament to the power of active resistance. They must resist genocide and marginalization **every single day**. Indigenous Nations have been fighting back for over 500 years inside America: confronting governments, calling out ethnic cleansing, protesting all of the broken treaties and promises, fighting their involuntary sterilization and the theft of their children; all the while maintaining their

ancestral inheritance, their culture and its traditions. They continue today, by letting their lives be their message, to remind us that the land does not belong to us; instead, **we belong to it**. Yet, as non-natives, our analysis has often lacked depth and integrity: we fail to see the interconnectedness of our struggles, we buy the myths and propaganda of our dominant, genocidal culture when it says they are *wild* or *savage*, we deny that there are problems that can be rectified today, or that we have any responsibility for what has transpired (even recently) in our name. **Instead of walking away when the going gets tough, this moment calls upon us to stand our ground and learn to manifest what genuine solidarity with all who struggle against this beastly system looks like.**

“We Americans are not usually thought to be a submissive people, but of course we are,” Wendell Berry writes. “Why else would we allow our country to be destroyed? Why else would we be rewarding its destroyers? Why else would we all—by proxies we have given to greedy corporations and corrupt politicians—be participating in its destruction? Most of us are still too sane to piss in our own cistern, but we allow others to do so and we reward them for it. We reward them so well, in fact, that those who piss in our cistern are wealthier than the rest of us. How do we submit? **By not being radical enough.** Or by not being thorough enough, which is the same thing.”

Chris Hedges continues that thought:

“It is not a new story. The rich, throughout history, have found ways to subjugate and re-subjugate the masses. **And the masses, throughout history, have cyclically awoken to throw off their chains...** The

seesaw of history has thrust the oligarchs once again into the sky. We sit humiliated and broken on the ground. It is an old battle. It has been fought over and over in human history. We never seem to learn. **It is time to grab our pitchforks.**”

Pitchforks and torches amass outside the castle; yes, that’s one way active resistance might manifest. But would it be the best way? Likely not, as it typically leads to replacing the current 1% with a new 1% that turn out to be worse. What could work? Clearly defining our **common interest** that can bring together diverse groups with otherwise divergent agendas. Focusing on what we share, not on what we disagree about. Developing a clear vision of our goal and our broad principles. We can’t convince everyone to go along with a particular point of view if we keep the focus too narrow. If we use a *litmus-test* to decide if we can work together, we limit our numbers and energy and resources; we cut ourselves off at the knees before we get started. Let’s get past playing into the divide-and-conquer game that our dominant culture has refined for centuries: make it work harder to subjugate us! How can we develop multiple systems: economic, environmental, social, political, and spiritual side-by-side but with a common theme?

- Discuss and decide upon a clear understanding of the rules of engagement: how will we operate? How will we decide? Violent? Sabotage? Education? Leaderless? Underground or aboveground?
- Discuss and decide on the practical: how best to pull out the foundations of the current pillars of power:
 - 1) control of group mind, beliefs, ideas

- 2) control of finance (money creation, tax, debt) and hence everyone's life
- 3) its monopoly on violence and intimidation to extract obedience through fear

- Envision the world that will come **once we win!**

Historically, we see this process going through 3 stages:

- Ideological: educating the public, pointing out hypocrisy, agitating discontent, controlling the public dialogue, inspiring hearts to help motivate participation and to keep spirits high even during the heartbreaking moments that will inevitably arise
- Strategic noncompliance, defiance, interrupting the chain of obedience, and continuing to spread the word, motivating by modeling behaviors
- Taking over the police and military; meaning that the police and army begin to support the revolution not the government. This is the straw that usually breaks the back of the dominant culture, when its whims can no longer be forced onto the people.

You can't tell from mainstream media, but we are already well into the second stage today. Even some people are working diligently to bring about the third stage, lobbying former colleagues within both the military and police forces. We are indeed close!

A few words about leadership: our current model is based in hierarchy. Many believe that our resistance should mirror our goal: an autonomous, decentralized, leadership, but one that has leaders, just not rulers. Consensus was a nice thought, but our experiences during the Occupy movement showed just how dysfunctional it is to give *blocking* power to just one

person. Especially in times when it is difficult to identify plants or infiltrators, that is a deeply problematic model. The real issues we are trying to remedy can be kept in check if we deny our *leaders* sole authority. Leaders can unify us through their ideas and their performance, not their charismatic personality or dictatorial authority. As a strategy, direct attacks on vital infrastructure works:

- Target selection is key:
 - Criticality, how important is it?
 - Vulnerability, how tough is it?
 - Accessibility, can you get to it?
 - Cost, is it worth the resources and manpower it will require?
 - Reparability, what would it take to repair it?
- Don't think like a vandal, think like a field general.
- Beware how fear and anger clouds our judgment and distorts our ability to plan. A great plan not only offers solutions to all possible problems, but it anticipates what the other side will do every step of the way by getting inside their thinking and perspective and seeing ourselves through their eyes. This technique is impossible if we are steeped in rage.
- Remember our goals: **End destruction, recover the land, and thus recover our sanity.**
- **No collaboration, isolate, boycott, sabotage.**

“I do not deny that I planned sabotage. I did not do this in a spirit of recklessness.

I planned it as a result of a long and sober assessment of the political situation after many years of oppression of my people by the whites.”

Nelson Mandela, while on trial in South Africa in 1964 for his crimes against the apartheid regime

Our goal must be to dismantle, or block entirely, the paradigms of genocide, patriarchy, and exploitation. In conjunction with that, we must be preparing the alternative, replacement structures that will foster life, not death.

Strategies include:

- Direct action against industrial, and in particular, energy, infrastructure
- Promote equality and undermine the existing domination regime
- Defend the land, our source: NO MORE BUILDING OR PAVING
- Manage ourselves: recruit, train, secure, supply, educate, motivate
- Begin rebuilding immediately! Today!

Our security is paramount. We will need both aboveground groups for recruiting, motivating, and educating our brothers and sisters who have yet to join with us, and underground cells capable of being the wrench thrown into the works to speed collapse. **The aboveground and the underground must remain separate;** if you want to be underground, stay underground. If you want to be effective aboveground, you cannot risk being caught during an underground action.

These types of responses to oppression and exploitation have happened before; we aren't creating something new. We can draw lessons from how things

have worked, or not, in past movements. These lessons⁹⁵ include:

Never Talk About...

- Your involvement or desire to get involved with, participation in, or advocacy for, an underground group.
- Someone else's involvement or desire to get involved with, participation in, or advocacy for, an underground group
- Your or someone else's plans for a future illegal action.

Also...

- Don't ask others if they are a member of an underground group.
- Don't talk about illegal actions in terms of specific times, people, places, etc.
- Nonviolent civil disobedience is illegal, but can sometimes be discussed openly if it is aboveground, and then only with people who will be involved in the action or those doing support work for them
- It's still acceptable (even encouraged) to speak out **generally** in support of monkey wrenching and all forms of resistance as long as you don't mention specific places, people, times, etc. Be sure it is legal in your own jurisdiction first, and be aware there may be repression or consequences if you do speak about this. Always make informed decisions about what level of risk you would be comfortable with.

Be Smart!

⁹⁵ Paraphrased from “*Deep Green Resistance*”, Lierre Keith, Aric McBay, and Derrick Jensen

- Learn the laws in your country/state/jurisdiction: learn what you can and can't say; learn what acts are legal and illegal; learn what previous activists have been tried for and what is permitted legally
- Research activist and protest lawyers/legal advocates in your area: if you go on an action, make sure you write their telephone number on your body in a permanent marker
- Link up with experienced local activists: they will have a wealth knowledge about the landscape of activism in your area, and can teach you local logistics and strategies for staying safe
- There is no way to effectively do aboveground work and keep your identity hidden. Nor is it beneficial or necessary to hide your identity to do aboveground work
- Operate on the assumption that **all internet and phone communication is monitored**. However, since aboveground movements have nothing to hide except occasional nonviolent civil disobedience, we can use the internet and phones to communicate in order to be able to organize and coordinate aboveground actions effectively
- Don't rely on cell phones or social media for your on-site communications; have a backup!
- If you have reason to not want attention from the government (for example, if you are not a citizen), then the best way to be as safe as possible is to not engage with any movement
- It's not safe nor a good idea to generally speculate or accuse people of being infiltrators. This is a typical tactic that infiltrators use to shut movements down. Paranoia can cause

destructive behavior. The important thing to focus on is addressing the behaviors.

- Police officers are legally allowed to lie to people – and do so routinely – to encourage compliance, both on the street and especially in interrogation.
- **Always watch what you say**, to whom, and who might overhear your conversation!
- Being aware of Security Culture makes you safer, but any effective action can lead to repression.
- Maintaining **strict separation** between the aboveground and any underground groups helps protect people.

What to do if there are breaches of Security Culture:

- Educate all members about security and point people (tactfully and privately) who breach Security Culture to further resources
- Don't let violations pass unremarked or become habit
- It's important and necessary to set boundaries. If a member consistently violates Security Culture, even after being corrected, for the safety of all, they should be told to leave the group and organizing spaces

Now I want to look deeply into the notion that **only** nonviolence can be used in active resistance...

Can Nonviolence Work?

“Nobody in the world, nobody in history, has ever gotten their freedom by appealing to the moral sense of the people who were oppressing them.”

Assata Shakur

“Nonviolence declares that Africans could have stopped the slave trade with hunger strikes and petitions, and that those who mutinied were as bad as their captors; that mutiny, a form of violence, led to more violence, and thus, resistance led to more enslavement.

Nonviolence refuses to recognize that it can only work for privileged people, who have a status protected by violence, as the perpetrators and beneficiaries of a violent hierarchy.”

Peter Gelderloos

Can nonviolence work? This is a core question that we must face if we are to be successful in our revolution. People often say: “Violence reflects badly on our cause”. They may say that they don’t want to use options that fail to reflect their own, peaceful values. They may not want to risk the wrath of a system that punishes any amount of violence with even greater brutality. They may say that nonviolence is the only course that falls within the envelope of *acceptable*. I understand very well how a video showing a police officer pepper-spraying quiescent, seated protestors is a great recruiting tool for activists. But did that bring about fundamental changes in our system? The answer is no. Nothing loving will lead the cold heart of power to show our world more love. To reach someone, you must speak their language. If that language is force, then only force will get through to them.

First, let’s define our terms. Violence: the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, or deprivation. Nonviolence means refusing to harm another person through the use of force. I draw a distinction here that violence is an action against people;

property is not included. As an example, one of the artifacts on display in the New York City museum commemorating the events of 9/11/01 is the handle of a squeegee. Some men had been trapped high in one of the Twin Towers, and someone in the stairwell stripped the rubber from the squeegee and used the remaining metal to hack at the drywall that imprisoned them. They were freed, and able to flee the building literally seconds before it collapsed. This was clearly a physical act of destruction against the wall and therefore the owner of the wall; yet I want to make it clear that when it comes to weighing the harm from the destruction of property with saving the lives of human beings, I side with saving life.

Is throwing a rock a violent act? Many activists argue that throwing rocks tarnishes the reputation of our movement for fundamental change and immediately disparages what they deem to be necessary: a nonviolent and/or peaceful resistance movement. This argument falls into the trap of letting western- or colonizer-dictated methods become our sole acceptable means to resist. **Oppressed people do not and should not have to explain their oppression to their oppressor, nor tailor their resistance to the comfort of the oppressors and their supporters.**

Here's why this discussion is important. Many people today agree with Maya Angelou when she writes, "If you don't like something, change it. And if you can't change it, change your attitude about it". This typifies the *change your consciousness* model where the individual is felt to be the source of their own remedy. But would we, for example, say, "If you don't like slavery, abolish it. And if you can't abolish it, change your attitude about it." Of course not. Substitute *rape*, or *war*, or *burning fossil fuels* for slavery and you begin to see a problem: the liberal, individual, solution-

is-new-consciousness mindset is incapable of making the changes we need today. It takes creating a radical, group- and relationship-based model that says the system is what has to be changed, not consciousness. And that means we must confront power, because power cedes nothing without a demand. Phrased differently, justice will not be won without struggle. Oppression is not an accident: polite, reasoned, and logical arguments will not make it stop. Our modern culture and societal structures are founded on genocide, slavery, and hierarchy; merely changing my perception will not stop the death these structures cause.

Another great leader who is held up as a paragon of nonviolence is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He is a great example not only because he constantly directed his followers to not return violence for violence, but also because he demonstrated that direct, nonviolent action **need not be passive**. Nonviolence has a tendency in America today to allow the comfortable to remain comfortable. Do you understand how important this work is? Do your neighbors? How many more marches or logical frameworks will it take to bring about systemic change? What can be accomplished to change the system as long as you remain comfortable? It seems to me that any of the actions we could take that the system deems acceptable, or that the legal structure permits, or that government will pay lip-service to, are precisely the actions that cannot change the system. Look around: after four decades of environmental protections, why are we still seeing rising cancer rates, increasing pollution in our land, air, and water, and an increasing rate of plant and animal extinctions? Is it because by using the hallowed tactics of nonviolence: negotiation and compromise, we allow too much of the *bad* stuff to continue and never get enough of the *good* stuff in return? If ten million people in the streets were

insufficient numbers to stop the invasion of Iraq in February 2003, how many would have been enough? Are there that many people in America?

By the end of his life, Dr. King was working for more than just civil rights: in his speech, delivered exactly one year before his death titled, "*Beyond Vietnam*", he stepped beyond matters of civil rights and began to tie the issues of race, class, militarism, and the economic inequality inherent in capitalism together into one huge issue. He was marginalized even within groups he had founded or led, due to this *crazy* and *impossible* path towards justice and equality. Even today, most people see one or two issues, if even that, rather than the deep interconnectedness of all of these problems. If he were still alive today, these are some of the ways in which Dr. King would be protesting President Obama:

- His use of drones for assassination of fighters and civilians alike
- Allowing Wall Street's criminality to go unpunished, even unexamined
- The way militarized and incentivized police forces around the country have fed the beast of Mass Incarceration, keeping people of color as second class citizens and destroying their communities and any chance they might have to come together in solidarity against the school-to-prison pipeline
- Building on the *Global War on Terror* that began after 9-11-01, and continuing to feed massive amounts of wealth to the military-industrial complex
- Allowing the increasing income inequality that threatens to drive the poor into street riots over issues of food and housing

- His failure to even discuss ways to provide jobs for everyone who wants one

Again I ask: is America a better place for the efforts put forth by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.? Would it be this way if he had put all of his effort into building new, separate institutions of food, justice, education, transportation, and voting; in order to be ready when the dysfunctional white racist culture “inevitably” collapsed, instead of **actively resisting** the power structures of his day? The answer, sadly, is no. If we try to create the new while the old consciousness still reigns, we use the same basic building blocks, because our mindset is contaminated by them, and our result will be just as flawed. Our *collective* consciousness must change first, for the reconstruction to succeed. Collective consciousness will not change until it is no longer controlled by the current authorities; and that means they have lost their power by collapse or by it being taken back by the people, now suddenly awake. Why do we think that all we need do is change light bulbs, drive less, carry cloth sacks to the store, and change our own individual consciousness about today’s issues? Solving our problems through *better* shopping keeps us deeply embedded within the old system we must replace. Yes, changing ourselves comes first, but it is only a step on the path: it is necessary **but not enough**. How is a front-yard garden going to save Mother Earth? Do we think it likely that the CEO of Monsanto will awaken one day, and dismantle his company in order to provide life on Earth with a sustainable future because he’s had an epiphany? And even if that happened, what are the odds that it would also occur to the CEOs of Halliburton, Lockheed Martin, Dow Chemical, JPM Chase, Bank of America, Cargill, and Ford to do the same thing, at the same time? And why, as you read this, do you have a sick feeling **that by broaching the subject of an active**

resistance to our existing paradigm of power and entitlement I've just become "too radical" to remain your friend?

Is it violence to carry a gun and fire it into the air to scare off intruders, as was done by black neighborhood patrols in the mid-1900s in the Deep South? Would you also like to know that in most cases, no one was ever hurt while this tactic saved countless lives? Is it violence to enter a research facility, free the animals held captive for testing purposes, and then set fire to the vacant building to prevent it from being used for these purposes again? Again, no one has been hurt in these actions, due to the diligent efforts of the people bent on stopping the needless death and suffering of living beings **without hurting human beings**. Is it violence to pour sugar into the gas tank of the bulldozer that is being used to clear away the forests along the route of a new tar sands pipeline? Stopping someone from lynching me is not an act of violence, but **it is** an act of force. Would you suggest that I, the victim, not resist just because you find violence abhorrent? Then if self-defense is a justification for violence, where do you draw the line and say this action is now **unacceptable violence**? Is it permitted for me, a bystander, to defend a woman against her male attacker? What if I defend a woman against the **attack** of toxic chemicals in the air from the nearby waste incinerator? I find it **impossible to accept monetary damages caused to a faceless corporation as being more valuable than human lives**, and thus safe from the use of force. Rendering that incinerator inoperable **is** self-defense.

Peter Gelderloos writes in, "How Nonviolence Protects the State":

“Nonviolence declares that Africans could have stopped the slave trade with hunger strikes and petitions, and that those who mutinied were as

bad as their captors; that mutiny, a form of violence, led to more violence, and, thus, resistance led to more enslavement. Nonviolence refuses to recognize that it can only work for privileged people, who have a status protected by violence, as the perpetrators and beneficiaries of a violent hierarchy.”

It has been pointed out that the tactics used by Gandhi in India would not have worked in Nazi Germany: the German culture of that time period would not have stood for the challenge to authority that Gandhi used to his advantage against the more passive British. It is also rarely pointed out that there was an armed resistance against the British in India. The colonial authorities saw Gandhi as more amenable to compromise, and thought he represented enough of the Indian people that any settlement he agreed to would also be seconded by the rebel leaders. They turned out to be correct; but this casts doubt about whether a totally nonviolent movement would have driven to the British to negotiate as quickly, or at all. Indeed, George Orwell wrote:

“Pacifism is objectively pro-fascist. This is elementary common sense. If others imagine that one can somehow *overcome* the German army by lying on one’s back, let them go on imagining it, but let them also wonder occasionally whether this is not an illusion due to security, too much money and a simple ignorance of the way in which things actually happen. As an ex-Indian civil servant, it always makes me shout with laughter to hear, for instance, Gandhi named as an example of the success of nonviolence. As long as twenty years ago it was cynically admitted in Anglo-Indian circles that Gandhi was very useful to the British government. Despotic governments can stand

moral force till the cows come home; what they fear is physical force.”

To be as clear as possible, let me state again: I am not arguing in favor of killing or injuring people to *get my way*. This is not a plea that everyone carry guns to work, the market, school, and the theater, nor even that we use guns to *defend ourselves* at home. Those who defend the *right* to have guns are usually fueled by their fear that the *other* will attack. Do you think you will ever use your weapon **effectively and morally in defense** of your family? What does that look like? Of course, the notion of gun control is equally outlandish: there are more guns than people in America today. There is no way; it is physically impossible, to ferret out every gun. Besides, having a gun is not the problem; using it as your best tool to end an argument or to solve a problem is the problem. How can we learn more effective ways to defuse tense situations? How can we begin to provide the mental and emotional support needed to keep our neighbors off of the anti-depressants that figure prominently **in every mass-shooting** of the last ten years? When will conflict resolution and nonviolent communication skills finally be taught to every child in school?

Barry Boyce, wrote about Gettysburg on the 150th anniversary of the battle, 1 – 3 July 2013:

“... [We can] appreciate the bravery of those who fought there – it was monumental. But don’t let this lesson be lost: we will inevitably dispute – and deeply – with each other, but the results are catastrophic when we ignore how interconnected we are and **leave ourselves no means other than aggression to navigate our differences...** Forgetting the toll aggression takes is so much easier than remembering it. It’s

easier to justify fighting as the solution to our inevitable opposing interests and viewpoints. The ultimate reason to remember Gettysburg is not so much to replay the exploits of the victors and the vanquished. It is to remember, **to mourn, how much is lost when we, each of us, choose to fight to the death.**" [emphasis added]

Ultimately, a well-mannered revolution is doomed to fail. Polite, rules-abiding challenges to authority have been rendered irrelevant and utterly without meaning as we have given up our rights following supposed attacks on our national *security*. If you follow the *law* you can no longer even raise your voice, not to mention stand on a street corner with a few friends while holding a sign. Danger is real. Fear is a choice. If we are to survive, we attack.

Malcolm X said there is no such thing as a nonviolent revolution, that if you believe that there is a nonviolent revolution, then you don't know what a revolution is. Violence in struggle is ever present, otherwise it's not struggle. The state, the powers that be, the status quo, all will repress you no matter what you do because you are struggling against it. That's the job of power. The state is an apparatus by which monopolized violence is expressed and enforced upon the population. It is the arbiter of the thuggery and murder of its military, its police, its laws, its structures, its institutions, and its justice system. To think that resistance of any kind, even the so-called nonviolent movements, emerge out of anything but violence is not just ignorant: it's delusional. It takes privilege to even think that nonviolent protest will bring about the end of repression. Justice will not be won without struggle. Oppression is not an accident;

polite and reasoned requests will not make it stop. **Revolution and Struggle is not a negotiation**, a protest, a compromise, a reform, or a new election. And neither are any of those things a strategy to any kind of real change. They have been done, and they have not worked. What will we do now?

Before we leave our section on active resistance, I want to explore one more vision of what we go through as we bring our spiritual and our physical, mental, and emotional lives into balance. The latter steps point to the ways we bring our Spirit to R Evolution. They are active and require diligence and dedication to manifest our better future. You might be feeling more than one stage at a time, and we will all be working these steps the rest of our precious lives. I hope you can see that it is worth every blow, every pain, every setback and every challenge.

1. Born into the Mass Trance: where we acquiesce to the insanity... obediently serving our worst interests without examination or question and for the sake of convenience or comfort. Characterized as numb, drugged, and senseless: we suffer a psychic and emotional plague blotting out our potential.
2. The Canary Dies: something comes into view that jolts us out of our cocoon... Often a deep, serious, personal and existential crisis erupts and begins a ferocious drive for knowledge and *truth*.
3. We Question: "Why?" Open to our heart for the first time...we can never go back to the old ways of seeing. Our natural draw towards truth and justice calls us to consider new ideas and outside perspectives. We search for a new bearing amidst a crumbling understanding of our world.

4. Our Dark Night: the dissonance between our inner and outer worlds fosters a crisis, physically or psychologically...and manifests materially as serious personal, mental, and physical crises. The entire sum and meaning of our existence is smashed and broken to pieces under the weight of our denial of our complicity in our own self-destruction. For many this phase lasts for years; and survival with spirit intact is not assured. If however, we manage to get past this stage...
5. We Find A Salve: we discover Spirit, Creator, Divine Mother, or a daily practice, **something** that leads us onto our new path. It can come in the form of an artistic endeavor or exercise, or an intense study of an esoteric healing physical art like Qi Gong, Yoga, Kung Fu, meditation, and so on. Medicine may also be found amongst healers, therapists, shaman, or even plant medicines.
6. We Detox: consciously we begin to rid our space and our psyche of toxic understandings. We link fluoride, heavy metals, GMO's and the poisons in our food our emotional state, stress levels, well-being and conscious awareness and begin to clear our energy field of these substances. A new relationship with food is developed and taking care of the body and health gradually becomes easier. Our toxic environment also includes our social interactions, and we find ourselves compelled to tune out of mainstream media, shallow conversation and illogic, and we begin to purge ourselves of the garbage that so many people consider important.
7. Rethinking Authority: we question the structures that kept us in line, and find them wanting. The designs of control and manipulation governing our social institutions and traditions are

rightfully exposed as farcical constructs that deter our evolution, while modern politics and government are understood to be laughable traps of dependence and deceit and therefore no longer beneficial to positive growth. **Non-conformity and non-compliance become moral obligations** and liberty is revalued to include **freedom from living in the fear-based consciousness** offered as the default way of life in the dominant culture. Ordinary people, because they follow the societal model of organizing into ridiculous pecking orders, squabbling for position at work, and submitting to any *authority figure* with a badge and cheap uniform, seem ridiculous now. Liberty becomes a constant struggle to decrease dependence on the systems that complicate life.

8. Letting Go: we discard what does not serve us and our new vision; we revolt... jettisoning the things, people, relationships, habits, and ideas which no longer serve and support us. We eliminate and purge sources of stagnant energy and negativity, creating space for new experiences and inspiration to enter and flow into our now-exciting life. This is one of the most renewing and healthy stages in our transformation.
9. We Connect: with mystery, with synchronicities, with the deeper reality that we are learning to manifest and so we manifest a new consciousness. Once the veil of the rigid scientific or religious mindset is pierced, intuition and curiosity flourish and we begin to re-assess the **potential** to find love and connection in all things and in all circumstances, **abandoning**

certainty in favor of wonder. Life becomes sacred, and as natural as it truly is.

Whether you are trying your best to protest peacefully, or undertaking some bit of sabotage that might land you in jail, or merely sitting on your couch, you must know about your rights and responsibilities when you encounter a law enforcement officer. Believe it or not, what you see on TV is not how things work in real life. Color me surprised.

First, some general tips⁹⁶:

- Always keep your hands in view of the officer, and if you are going to do something with your hands, tell the officer before you move.
- NEVER touch an officer, even to brush hands away that are offending or hurting you.
- Don't be moving behind an officer who is speaking with someone else.
- NEVER RUN. Don't even walk fast.
- Take a deep breath: STAY CALM! When you start to get scared or stressed out again, take a deep breath: STAY CALM!
- Police are allowed to lie to you, but you should never lie to them. Officers do not press charges, only the District Attorney can charge an offense. Remember this when an officer is telling you

⁹⁶ Disclaimer: I AM NOT A LAWYER. This is NOT LEGAL ADVICE. This is information widely available upon the internet, and we all know how unreliable that can be! If you are planning any type of action, seek legal counsel to determine if any of this tips are invalid in your area. Have the number of a lawyer memorized or tattooed on your body where you can see it while dialing the jail's pay phone.

what you *will be charged with* or what *deal* you are being offered.

- Every word you say is part of an *interrogation*, no matter how *casual* it may seem.

Let's get into the *casual conversation* in more detail. Whenever the cops ask you anything besides your name and address, it's **legally safest** to say **only** these Magic Words:

“Officer, I will identify myself to the extent the law requires; however, I do not consent to any search and I do not answer questions without my lawyer present. Am I free to go?”

Making this statement protects you in many ways⁹⁷. It invokes the rights which protect you from interrogation. When you say this, police (and all other law enforcement officials) are legally required to stop asking you questions. They probably won't stop, so just continue to repeat the Magic Words or remain silent until they catch on. It also lays the groundwork you might need later regarding being improperly searched. Despite your statement, officers may search you anyway if they have concerns for their own safety. This includes a cursory pat-down to ensure you are not carrying a weapon, hence the admonition not to brush an officer's hands away. Make your statement, repeat as necessary, but allow the officer to conduct whatever search they want. Lastly, as long as you are *free to go*, consider that to be permission to end the conversation and leave. If you are

⁹⁷ The Magic Words not only apply to police but also to the FBI, ICE, CIA, even IRS.

not free to go, ask, “Why am I being detained?” Officers can *detain you* so that they can verify you are free of arrest warrants for instance, without actually arresting you. They may detain you to have time to write out a ticket. Or they may detain you **to have time to trip you up in conversation and give them a reason to arrest you** or your friends. Detention means that, though you aren’t arrested, you can’t leave. Detention is supposed to last a short time and they aren’t supposed to move you. They aren’t supposed to go into your pockets unless they feel a weapon during the pat-down. However, and this is important, while you are detained you are not required to answer any questions! Remain silent or repeat the Magic Words, but don’t let the lack of arrest get your tongue to wagging unless that is your plan from the beginning. Remember, anything you say to the authorities can and will be used against you and your friends in court. There’s no way to predict what information the police might try to use or how they’d use it. Plus, the police often misquote or lie altogether about what was said. Also if your story changes at all you will open yourself up to prosecution, possibly for something completely unrelated to the officer’s primary reason for stopping you.

Make sure that when you’re arrested with other people, the rest of the group knows the Magic Words and promises to use them. If even one person fails to remain silent, the entire group may be at risk of arrest on trumped up charges. Hold a mandatory class ahead of time where everyone learns the rules and role-plays both calm and unruly situations: **inoculate your friends against the types of mind control games police will play on you**. It is their job to get information from you, and they usually don’t care what they have to say to do it. Cops are trained to be

manipulative. The only thing you should say to police, other than identifying yourself, are the Magic Words.

Here are **some lies** they will tell you:

- “You’re not a suspect — just help us understand what happened here and then you can go.”
- “If you don’t answer my questions, I’ll have no choice but to arrest you. Do you want to go to jail?”
- “If you don’t answer my questions, I’m going to charge you with resisting arrest.”
- “All of your friends have cooperated and we let them go home. You’re the only one left.”
- Good Cop/Bad Cop: Bad cop is aggressive and menacing, while good cop is nice, friendly, and familiar (usually good cop is the same race and gender as you). The idea is bad cop scares you so bad you are desperately looking for a friend. Good cop is that friend.
- Police will tell you that your friends ratted on you so that you will snitch on them. Meanwhile, they tell your friends the same thing. If anyone breaks and talks, you all go down.
- Police will tell you that they have all the evidence they need to convict you and that if you “take responsibility” and confess the judge will be impressed by your honesty and go easy on you. What they really mean is: “we don’t have enough evidence yet, please confess.”

The Golden Rule: Never trust a cop.

Jail is a very isolating and intimidating place. It is really easy to believe what the police tell you. Insist upon speaking with a lawyer before you answer any questions or sign anything. Also understand that the police do not have to read you your rights, also known as the *Miranda*

warnings. *Miranda* only applies in certain situations, and even when all these conditions are met, the police often intentionally violate *Miranda*. And despite your rights being violated, what you say **can still be used against you**. For this reason, it is better not to wait for the warning: you know what your rights are, so you can invoke them by saying the Magic Words.

If you've been arrested and realize that you have started answering questions, **don't panic**. Just re-invoke your rights by saying the Magic Words again. Don't let them trick you into thinking that because you answered some of their questions, you have to answer all of them.

If the police come to your door with an *arrest warrant*, go outside and lock the door behind you. Cops are allowed to search any room you go into, so don't go back into the house for any reason. If they have an arrest warrant, hiding won't help because they are allowed to force their way in if they know you are there. It's usually better to just go with them without giving them an opportunity to search. If they want to enter your home to search for anything or anyone without a *search warrant*, you do not have to comply. Remember after the Boston Marathon bombings: those videos of people walking out of their homes with their hands on their heads, being searched on the sidewalk, then rushed off to stand behind the armored personnel carriers while police went through their home room-by-room? **TOTALLY ILLEGAL**, but allowed since the innocent citizens consented to the search. Many feel this was a dry run to help mentally prepare the rest of the country for what might happen during martial law declarations (coming soon?). Be careful about casual consent. For example, if you are stopped by the cops and you get out of the car but don't close the door, they can search the car and claim that they thought you were indicating

consent by leaving the door ajar. Say the Magic Words; ambiguous statements like, “I’d prefer you didn’t search my car” don’t stand up in court. If they do have a search warrant, ask to read it. A valid warrant must have a recent date (usually not more than a couple of weeks), the correct address, and a judge’s or magistrate’s signature; some warrants indicate the time of day the cops can search. You should say the Magic Words whether or not the search warrant appears correct.

Whenever you interact with or observe the police, always write down what is said and who said it. Write down the cops’ names and badge numbers, police car numbers, and the names and contact information of any witnesses. Record everything that happens. If you are expecting a lot of police contact, get in the habit of carrying a small tape recorder and a camera with you. Be careful: cops don’t like people taking notes, especially if the cops are planning on doing something illegal. Observing them and documenting their actions may have very surprising results: it may cause them to respond aggressively, or it may prevent them from abusing you or your friends. You have a legal right to video any encounter as long as you stay out of their way. Let’s all get in the habit of using our phone cameras to record every police encounter we see, **even if we don’t know the people involved**. Follow their directions about how far back to stand, even though the farther away you stand the harder it is to record what is being said. Still, some video is better than none. Activists have also had success by starting a voice recorder application and slipping their phone back into their pocket where no one knows it is recording. This may not hold up in a court of law, but in the court of public opinion it can be damning.

And finally, a few words about another common reason that activists go to jail: infiltrators and

informants. Undercover cops sometimes infiltrate political or radical organizations. They can lie about being cops *even if asked directly*. Undercover **cops can even break the law** (narcotics officers even get hazard pay for doing drugs as part of their cover) and encourage others to do so as well. And with the revelations over the years, and particularly in 2013, it should be clear to everyone that you cannot use or even carry a cell or smart phone that still has a battery installed if you want to have a hope that your location or conversations will not be recorded. Even supposedly *anonymous* pre-paid phones if they are manufactured for a U.S. carrier, have identifying information encoded in all signals. There are a few phones, mainly manufactured in China, that do not. Otherwise, every phone is traceable back to you if you use it. And using the internet or social apps to plan or coordinate operations? Don't make me laugh.

As activists, we deal with police in all kinds of circumstances. Each person must make an individual decision about how they will interact with law enforcement. It is important to know your legal rights, but it is also important for you to decide when and how to use them in order to best protect yourself. ***Above all, stay safe!***

Ultimately It Comes Down To This
Our evolution requires our revolution:
organize or die!

“Think of all the people who showed up to listen to the Buddha, all the people who showed up to hear the words of Jesus. They are attracted to a certain spirit, which is often lacking in places where people profess to be about spirit.”

Alice Walker

Today’s threat of collapse will not be avoided if we sit back and analyze the situation and *decide* to make a change. That’s not how society evolves; evolution happens when the old way is so broken there is no choice but to change or become extinct. But whether you call this fork in our evolutionary path a revolution or a collapse depends on whether you hold out hope for a brighter tomorrow, or not. Any collapse of western culture will ultimately be a collapse of money and infrastructure, due to energy and resource constraints, but these are just the symptoms of a much deeper and more fundamental problem: the **collapse of our human spirit**. It is good to be clear: what world are you trying to save? The one where militaries rule? Where companies have more rights than individuals? Where consumption is the measure of the person? Or rather the one where people cooperate, where even Nature has rights that trump those of companies, and where **who you are** counts more than what you have? Do you feel in your heart that we can have a world based on cooperation and ethics instead of violence and exploitation?

Can we acknowledge that our problems stem not from corrupt or inept government officials, and thus our solutions cannot be about electoral reform? Can we begin to see that our problems stem from our indoctrination in a system that insists we have to have money to buy the things we need just to live? Can we finally begin to challenge the law of capitalism which places profit above people and Nature? Can we acknowledge that our problems arise from **our inability to question that which makes us comfortable**? Electing new leaders will not bring about change, Obama being just our most recent example. Replacing the President, or the CEO of Citibank, does not alter the needs and demands placed upon those powerful positions by the needs of the economy. Capitalism insists on converting **everything** into a good or service that can be made or sold for profit. We humans know how to hunt and fish and survive within a family or tribe that meets our needs (at least we used to, before we gave control of our lifestyle to corporations) and we don't need money to live and be happy. But letting go of our electronic toys, of tomatoes in January flown in from Brazil, of air conditioning our home when the temperature is 78 degrees outside; these are not actions that most people will take gladly. It will take some event that makes these signs of *progress* impossible, in order to right the ship that is capitalism and democracy today.

Robert Jensen writes:

“If there is to be a decent future, we have to give up on the imperial fantasy of endless power, the capitalist fantasy of endless growth, the technological fantasy of endless comfort. Those systems have long been celebrated as the engines of unprecedented wealth, albeit for a limited segment of the world's population. **Instead of**

celebrating, we should mourn the world that these systems have created and search for something better. Systems that celebrate domination are death cults, not the basis for societies striving for justice and sustainability.

“Our task can be stated simply: We seek justice, the simple plea for decent lives for all, and sustainability, a balance in which human social systems can thrive within the larger living world. Justice and sustainability have a common economics, politics, ethics, and theology behind them -- rooted in a rejection of concentrated power and hierarchy -- but there is no cookbook we can pull off the shelf with a recipe for success. We can articulate principles, identify rough guidelines, and search for specific solutions to immediate problems.” [emphasis added]

Sadly, Sharon Astyk writes:

“About five years ago a colleague of mine, Dale Allen Pfeiffer wrote an essay I can no longer locate. At the time, Colony Collapse Disorder was just being diagnosed in bees, and one of the discussed potential causes of the problem was cell phones and cell phone towers. Pfeiffer didn't, as I remember, take a stand on this question as a cause, but what he did do was interview people and ask “If it was true that cell phones caused CCD, and knowing that we depend on bees for a large portion of our food, would you give up your cell phone to save the bees?”

The answer, overwhelmingly, was no.”

This is why we must struggle, in new and **more active and profound ways**. There is much to be done if we are to awaken enough souls to the reality of this society and its immediate future to save us. We usually fail to question deeply enough the inconsistencies we are sold by our media, the inequality inherent in our method of trade, the lies we are told by those we have been taught to hold in authority. It will mean learning a new way of happiness; but we have all touched that happy world before, we know it exists if only in a hard-to-reach recess of our heart. It means not looking outside ourselves; outside for validation, outside for love, outside for responsibility, outside for authority to make good and fair decisions. It means not accepting *there is no alternative* as an excuse to remain cocooned in fleeting material comforts at the expense of our neighbors and our local, and our global, ecology. It means giving past the point of comfort, and taking only just enough. It means overcoming the learned helplessness that our culture instills in us: remember how elephants are trained? Our learned helplessness manifests because the mainstream media controls the message; both in culture, with titillating programs and scandals distracting us and defining the envelope of acceptable behavior, and with the *official* narrative about large events that further the shock doctrine and twist the emotion into the action that authority desires. Or maybe we have to overcome Stockholm syndrome; at least some of us have *fallen in love* with our captors, and do whatever we can to ensure that our abuse will continue. Crafting the change we need means **saying no to the fear** that is used to dominate us, to cause us to cower from an expected blow, to cause us to keep paying our bills even when our children are hungry, to cause us to ignore the poor souls who can only find warmth in

January while riding the one city bus that runs all night long.

The words of Stephane Hessel:

“It’s time to take over! It’s time to get angry! . . . Let us not be defeated by the tyranny of the world financial markets that threaten peace and democracy everywhere. I wish all of you to find your reason for indignation. This is a precious thing.”

It is impossible to separate out one thread of our problems, war for example, and work solely to solve that **one** problem. We have to open our process to be inclusive, balancing *all the issues at once*; seeking their commonalities; looking for practical, intellectual, and emotional solutions; integrating objective, experiential, and subjective perspectives; and ask that everyone contribute their own views if we hope to have success. We must seek ways to experience closer relations with each other and with our world; a world that supports us to the extent that it can, and for which we can be exceedingly grateful and reciprocal, not one that we pillage while thinking we are in control. We are quick to claim our human *rights*, but not nearly so fast to step into our human *responsibilities*. What would it mean if our responsibilities required⁹⁸ us:

- to always speak freely and **truthfully**
- to **actively rebel** against injustice and oppression
- to build into our politics the notion that **ordinary people** are supposed to be in charge
- to **cherish** each person and the rule of law
- to disagree **without resorting to violence**

⁹⁸ Paraphrasing Naomi Wolf here

- to recognize that liberty is universal: America cannot act as an oppressor elsewhere to preserve liberty here

We love the comfort and distractions offered by oil and plastics, but deny or ignore the impact our lifestyle has on life today and for many generations to come. We face the pull of our rational, egoic mind: it barks at us, as if it were our master, “Where can you get a better job? When can you buy a bigger house? How do you think you will survive if your car breaks down? How long can you wait, now that your friends have the latest iPhone, to get your own?” ***There are too many reasons not to change.*** We need a new perspective that incorporates so much that is different to us, and yet it is likely to reflect the views of those First Nations peoples who even today maintain their spirits in deep communication with the **whole** of our world, who maintain **integrity** with Creator and Mother Earth. Human beings can and do live in ways that are sustainable over eons; what will it take to transform what is so dysfunctional about America today into that Way of Being? What are we waiting for?

We are dissatisfied with corporate, classist, careerist, compromising groups that ignore social and environmental damage to women, people of color, poor and lower (working) class humans. Entrenched environmental and social groups dilute legislation in the name of compromise, praise ephemeral tech without considering the inevitable unintended consequences, and embrace the philosophy that market forces will choose the best solution despite historical proof that **more profit** is the only viable **solution** that ever arises from markets. None of these so-called solutions address the root problem. Achieving climate justice will require dismantling the fossil fuel corporate power

structure as well as a commitment to reparations to those already harmed, and thus a fair redistribution of our world's wealth. To truly win, land and justice defenders must recognize there are overlapping systems of oppression within this capitalist culture, and take strategic cues from the communities most impacted by colonization, militarism, and poverty. Yet, any movement that operates in solidarity with frontline communities must do more than blog about it or click on the *sign* button for an online petition. A movement that supports those who are seen as nothing but collateral damage to the system must do more than just network with them, it must ask that they lead the charge to fight off the oppression that only they feel. We're going to have to get out of our chairs and off our computers if we are to get this job done. We're going to have to get real.

I have a healthy disrespect for authority, and **you can too**. When you know something is wrong, fight it. When you see injustice, call it out. When you are comfortable, dig deep and ask: "*Who was hurt, so that I may have this easy life?*" and then change your lifestyle to prevent that hurt from continuing. There can be no peace without justice, and justice means decolonization: decolonizing our minds to see the lies and illogic of this culture, decolonizing our emotions to grow out of taught self-loathing and self-restraint, and decolonizing our spirit to begin to experience the love and the energy that underlies every being and that connects us all into one Universe. I am reminded of this quote from the Talmud: "*To save one life is to save the world entire.*" We know deep in our hearts, that this is true: One can contain everything...and everything is One. Ask you self: "*How do I. Live. My. Life... if that is true?*"

When you are healthy and happy you are not a threat to me. Altruism, putting you in front of me, is the **only**

way I find peace and security. It serves my interest to make sure you are fed, clothed, housed, and educated. Teach everyone in Afghanistan to read and the Taliban cannot survive. I'm not fighting against you or even the 1%; it is true that you might be closer to the top than I, or I might be closer than you, but **we are all still on the same mountain.** This is about **all of life**, not just me, my neighbors, or you. Think of everything you value: family, future, love, whatever it might be. Now remember how it is that you have the ability to experience these feelings: someone fought to preserve or create the space in which they flourish. It falls to us to carry on that fight. Hope is our match, but it takes action, actually striking the match, to start the fire that purifies our world and removes the rot. At each step along our path we can go in many directions, even some we could not have foreseen a few short steps before. But we have to take the next step, and the next, in order to see what becomes visible and possible. We gather others and choose our steps carefully; thus we blaze a new trail into possibility.

The future **will not** be more of the same, only bigger. It will also not be complete, total, and sudden collapse. Rather we are already in collapse: a power outage during a Super Bowl, hundreds of far-flung bases around the world sapping our ability to care for our neighbors here at home, the empty buildings in New York City that will never get power again after the storm surge from Sandy flooded their basement power panels, our Gulf Coast still not rebuilt from Katrina and now dying as a result of the oil spill of 2010 and the Corexit used to make the problem disappear from the surface of the ocean and the media. It is in these times that people who are creative, flexible, and willing to try new ways of doing things can thrive. The less burdened you are, the easier it will be. Let go of the old dream, embrace a new one. Less

Energy, Stuff, Stimulation (LESS) is the new motto for those who care about our world.

The only movement (or government) worth having is one that is committed to equality and universal human rights in everything it is, says, and does. The leaders who craft this movement will have to do things like flip dilemmas, organize social mobs, and constructively and quickly depolarize debates. They need to be leaders who transcend their personal interest and instead empathize with others and with nature itself, finding the path that serves the greater good, the commons, the very Earth itself as if it were a living being. They need to be clear in their vision and agile on how to get there. Empathy and love for all life will be a prerequisite for participating in remaking this dominant culture. These skills are not taught in leadership development and executive training classes today; they result from deep inquiry into the nature of reality, a search for soul, and experiences of love and forgiveness. Understanding this leads us to seek rich experiences that empower us to embody these skills, as well as finding low-risk opportunities to practice them.

If we are to have a conversation, if we are to craft a society that is just and equal and supportive rather than what we endure today, if we are to spend our capital and energy in ways that are effective, then we have to **include all voices**. We can't marginalize and ignore the conservative Tea Party member because he challenges **our sacred values** by demanding that we put down our plate full of entitlements and step away from the government table. We can't ridicule the corporate executive who has worked hard for his wages and wants to keep them free of tax. When we use these methods to exclude people who don't accept our own sacred values we are not asking the key question: what do we want our government to do for us, and how will

we, collectively as taxpayers, actually pay for those services? Instead we are ensuring that the only voices we let into our awareness mirror our own, limited perspective.

What if a collapsing economy is part of *the plan*? Are systems created by others and we meekly follow the rails like cows to slaughter? Are we being tied by strings we can easily break, but which we don't test because we've been trained into hopelessness? We choose with every action, every thought, and every purchase we make. We could bypass the elites, trading locally with or without *their* money. We could end our consumption and find the loving, peaceful, and just inner world that we then manifest. What if *their goal* is to recalibrate wages at a much lower level; how will they trigger a crisis that allows them, using the technique Naomi Klein wrote about in her book "*The Shock Doctrine*", to change the economic paradigm? Realize it is an alternative currency *only* that is keeping the Greek population alive; the official economy is bankrupt and in literal collapse.

There are alternatives. If your only source of news is the *spun* and phony dialogue on the corporate media outlets, you really don't stand a chance of knowing what myriad alternatives are available right in your own neighborhood. **Turn off the TV.** And then the next step: once you know what is happening, you have to begin to wake others up too. Point out the spin every time you see someone point to an article in a newspaper. Urge your family and friends to get outside, to listen to Nature and not the news on the mainstream media. Place your hands in dirt and watch the miracle of life producing food that can sustain you through the tough times ahead. Give thanks for the miracles and wonders and people in your life.

With technology able to take over arduous and repetitive tasks, human beings can be free to do what we

do best: care for each other and our environment, create and invent, teach and learn. It is not a Law of Nature that we earn a wage in order to eat, drink, and stay healthy and warm. Rather it is a law merely of this society, and it is a law that **can change**. We **can cooperate**, we **can help** each other as we are wired to do. We **can make** this massive, fundamental change. One of the most meaningful contributions we can make today to bring about a sustainable future is to have this conversation with others and to find ways to erode the mindset that prohibits us from sharing this abundant world with every life form.

And here is one more issue of great importance: the environmental movement is white by a huge majority. It pays to ask ourselves why. Is it because the movement fights for the rights of animals and Nature, and not for the rights of humans to live in a toxic-free ecosystem? Is it because we fight to save mountaintops hundreds of miles away, while ignoring the incinerator planned for the resource-poor neighborhood thirty miles away? Is it because we demand cheap electricity to power our laptops to mount our campaigns, without ever asking where the power comes from, what communities suffer to provide it, and who doesn't yet have the luxury of their own power supply? Is it because we have the time to study these issues, to hold meetings to plan our actions, and the security of a 401(k) plan that allows us to feel generous enough to donate to our favorite environmental group, rather than holding down multiple jobs, using all our time and energy and money, just to be able to provide breakfast for our children before they go to school each morning? Until we acknowledge that there are life-and-death struggles happening **right now, in our own neighborhood**, and do something about them, we will fail to solve any of the issues that we worry about today.

This must end. We must end it. Let your life be a friction that slows down the corporate machine. *Never again* means others shouldn't suffer: it is up to us to say *it is not OK* and then put an end to suffering. Let's not delude ourselves into thinking we will ultimately be successful. No one who has ever tried to bring about a world of only goodness, truth, and beauty has ever been successful. But we can't let the impossibility of living always in love and justice freeze us into inaction. We accept that we will die unfulfilled; yet the struggle is the reward, the path itself is the important part of why we live these too-short lives in duality.

A powerful nation has taken away what is my right: to live in harmony with all life, to live from my soul, and to feel my fundamental connection with my Creator. It uses media, education, enslavement, capitalism, and lies, to control me, to make me think I am unworthy, to make me think I have no say in how am I to live, to leave me feeling isolated and ultimately alone, and to teach me that if I disobey I will pay a heavy price. But I have begun to see what is happening, and to reclaim my heritage. Now I have to choose my path: do I continue to live small, as this nation demands, or begin to live large, outside the bounds of this terrestrial *authority*? Should I acquiesce to the demands? Should I step out? I know what I will do. What path will **you** take?

Zen Gardner says:

“When it gets to the point where you know you're about to face virtual death via incarceration in a totalitarian state; when you're watching your fellow man being bulldozed into a spiritual, political, economic, and social mass grave of permanently suspended truth; when the evidence of political, military and draconian law

enforcement thuggery becomes overwhelming; when the population grows sicker and weaker by the hour and you realize all of this toxicity is being engineered by these same psychopathic rulers... I'll tell you what – they'd better head for their bunkers. Because decent, caring and responsible humanity will not take it much longer.”

Where is that point for you? What will finally open your eyes, or move you to take a stand? Will it come only when your personal government benefits (unemployment, Social Security, Medicare) fade away? When a clean and sober family member ends up serving 20-to-life for drug possession because of drugs that were left in his car accidentally by a friend? When the multi-national corporation you work for lays you off in order to increase the profits of shareholders, which makes you default on your home loan and gets you kicked to the curb by an uncaring bank? When your retirement account evaporates ~~the next~~ every time the stock market crashes? When your daughter is raped by her fellow Army squad members, then dies in a chemical weapons attack in some Middle Eastern country you can't even find on a map? The oceans hold 10% of the fish that lived there in 1870; it is hard to understand why we are not **blowing up every single fishing boat** or trawler. Twenty-five percent of the air pollution over Los Angeles comes from China, it is hard to understand why we are not shutting down every coal-fired power plant. We see what happens to a nuclear reactor when it loses power and can no longer circulate water through its core; it is hard to understand why we continue to grant them *licenses*, or continue to let them operate with taxpayers backstopping the costs of their accidents (at a global rate of one meltdown per seven years in

operation). *Investing **even one new cent in oil** and gas extraction is investing in the death of our children and their children. People die when we commute.*

When will you have had enough of this system; when will fighting back begin to make sense to you? We are fighting to show that we love our fellow man, and to prove that we have self-love and self-respect. **Are you with us?**

Inspiration

America Is Dead. Long Live America. Out of the ashes of the old arises the new. How might our **vision**, our **creativity**, our **compassion**, allow us to manifest a world of abundance that holds all life sacred?

Build this new paradigm. See the possibility of collapse without fear, without suffering, because we can see the light of love illuminating our path. Quell the acculturated desire to go along with the crowd, to act according to the old normal, just to be accepted or liked. Find your peace inside and live it in every moment.

CHANGE IS INEVITABLE AND MAY BRING PAIN, BUT IT **DOES NOT REQUIRE SUFFERING.**

Debt cannot be the foundation of our money. Creating money out of *thin air*, banks do not deserve interest as their *own* money is hardly at risk. This Ponzi scheme requires fools or foreclosures to grow and must be replaced. Money is a way to trade energy; your personal work exchanged for goods and services, and that is all!

End speculation and our *casino* mentality. Stocks should be a way to invest in companies and share in the profits, not a tool for gambling. Tax short term gains at 90%. Forbid short sales. Celebrate slow money.

Feel an **amazing joy** found amid life in Nature.
Life abounds! Earth will survive even Man's
mistakes!

Greed is a cycle to overcome: the more you get the
more you want. Its remedy is to be generous, giving
even when it is uncomfortable. How much is
enough; enough food, enough money, enough stuff?

Honor your instincts. Fat, sugar, and salt were
always scarce. When you found a source, it was
evolutionarily appropriate to gorge on them. Today
this makes us obese. Know why you do what you do.

Institutions **never last forever**. There are many
alternatives to every paradigm. Search for better
ways!

Juxtapose Nature's right to surround Man with an
abundance of **real wealth** with a corporation's
supposed *right* to pursue only profit at the expense
of the people and ecosystems. Corps are not real!

KNOW AND DEEPEN YOUR INTIMATE
RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR **HIGHER POWER**.

Learn and role model the 3 greatest
Commandments: Love God, love your neighbor, love
yourself.

Movetoamend.org Getting corporations out of politics is simple. No company funds can be spent to buy media that is not product-related, to sponsor lobbyists, or to fund political campaigns. Corps are a fiction created to protect people from liability for their actions and are focused entirely on profit, not *real* wealth.

REPEAT AS NEEDED: NO ONE HAS GONE TO JAIL!

NUZZLE SOMEONE EVERY DAY. INTIMACY IS PRICELESS!

OFFER KINDNESS TO OTHERS IN RANDOM AND CREATIVE WAYS.

Participate in the growing movement towards healthy relationships, families and communities. Step out of Wall Street with its international banking & investments and focus on speculation & profits and instead step onto Main Street, supporting and working with your neighbors instead. **Share, invest, grow local.**

Quiet your monkey mind and listen for the small inner voice deep inside your heart urging you to lean into new *creative possibilities* and exciting new experiences available *in each and every moment!*

**REALIZE RECYCLING IS NOT
THE ANSWER!** Our culture amazingly
thinks **that it is easier to:** drill and extract oil from
underground and/or water, transport it to a refinery,
turn it into plastic, shape it appropriately, ship it to a
store where you drive to buy it and take it home and
throw it into a *recycling* container to be trucked to
some poor neighborhood or ecosystem in an attempt
to *absolve your own guilt*, **THAN IT IS TO
WASH A SPOON AFTER EATING.**

**SACRED REVERANCE FOR ALL LIFE FORMS
IS OUR ONLY HOPE FOR PEACE AND
HAPPINESS.**

Tell a different story. **KNOW THAT YOU ARE
NOT YOUR STUFF, YOUR JOB, OR YOUR MONEY.**
Seek a different story, with a different ending and
point of view; one that leads to **peace and
joy.**

Unite your voice with others who are steeped in
compassion and love. Expound and demonstrate
your profound, unique, and **exquisite creativity**
and ability to light the path for others who will
follow.

Value dialogue as a way to understand others and
their needs. Reframe your story to include all
stakeholders. Deeply listen to others; respect the
experiences that led them to their view; evolve your
views.

Walk you talk because the Universe reflects your inner world back at you. **LOVE YOURSELF AND SEE LOVE AS IT SURROUNDS YOU IN EVERY MOMENT!**

Xpand your view of what is possible. **LIVE AS THE BEING YOU CAME HERE TO BE.**

Yield your desire to control; instead accept this moment as perfect and eager to grant you new experiences, sensations, and wisdom. Yearn for greatness, and then step into you full and complete voice.

**ZEST FOR LIFE:
EMBRACE IT!**

Paper or Plastic?

No, I am not asking about your preferred tote from the market; hopefully, by now, you are reusing bags, not demanding a new one with every trip. Instead I am referring to how you pay for those purchases, and your gas (if you are still driving), and your bills. The idea of a *cashless* society has been around for years; let's look at the advantages that remain today when we use cash or check, rather than plastic credit or debit cards.

- From a rebellious perspective, the best thing about cash is that it directly robs banks of profit. It does this in three ways:
 - Banks charge merchants every time a customer uses plastic. Fees are different for different banks, and for different purchases, and for different types and brands of cards. But typically a merchant gives up 3% of the sale just to have the payment processed electronically. This is one big reason why financial sector profits now exceed 40% of all corporate profits in the U.S.; historically, banks represent less than 10% of all profits. Even direct debit payments cost money to process, paid for by the merchant.
 - Another big reason banks are so profitable is due to the fees they

charge for insufficient funds or debit card overdrafts. It seems counter-intuitive that in this age of instant communication that a debit card transaction can't determine at the point-of-sale that there are insufficient funds and reject the payment immediately; however, banks don't want to do that as they crave charging overdraft fees. Paying with cash saves you money in fees even as it blocks banks from collecting them.

- Banks can only lend based on the amount of their reserves. Removing your funds in the form of cash, and keeping that cash at home (where you might want it in a prolonged power outage when no form of plastic works to buy food and supplies) deprives the banks of the ability to leverage *your money* into *their profits* from interest payments made by borrowers.

- You just might be able to keep more of your money if you keep it in cash rather than as a few, easily confiscated or manipulated bits in the bank's mainframe. Other than security, you gain little by leaving your money at their disposal since they haven't paid interest to speak of in years. Being a creditor of the bank, *and you are just another creditor should the bank go bust*, can

turn out badly for you. And leaving funds in an account might leave you vulnerable to being *Cyprused*, all assurances by government and regulators and even the FDIC to the contrary.

- You might also save cash because it seems psychologically more difficult to pay for something with dollars that come from your pocket or pocketbook, rather than by swiping a piece of plastic. Just as keeping a diary of every amount you spend for several weeks leads to a desire not to have to write down this potential purchase, we find we just spend less of the green stuff than the plastic stuff.
- I grant that you may not care about this next point if you are shopping at a nationwide chain; you will assume that the cost is built into the price already, and who cares if they send that 3% to a massive corporation that is not a bank, rather than to a bank? However, if (as I sincerely hope) you are shopping at a locally-owned business, leaving the 3% charged by banks for plastic processing in the hands of your local proprietor can be **huge**, and keeping that extra money in our community rather than sending it away to some corporate headquarters on the other coast can have visible, tangible benefits for you and your neighbors.
- To branch off of that point, there are times when using plastic keeps us isolated, processing our business inside

a solitary cocoon, devoid of human interaction. We pump our own gas (jobs lost!) after sending our 3% tithe to the banks through the pay-at-the-pump mechanism, and we rarely go inside where the lone employee sits to purchase anything other than gasoline. When you use cash, you give the owner reason to continue to employ a person to take money, even if only at minimum wage. If enough of us paid with cash, maybe that wage could go up! By the way, this idea of self-checkout is insidious: stores and banks need fewer human staff as more and more of their business processes themselves and pays with plastic. Avoid market self-check lines and ATMs whenever possible, if you value your contribution to giving neighbors gainful employment. I even use the human checkout counter at my local library, trying to ensure that the staff maintains their opportunity for employment, rather than use the self-checkout machine to do the work myself. You can even be so subversive as to chat with the bank teller about why you are only cashing the check, not leaving most of the funds in the bank account, with the cashier about why you pay with cash, or with the librarian about why you enjoy the service they provide!

- It may well be that you have come to terms with how increasing our debt is so problematic on so many levels of our society; but for the personal perspective,

if you still use plastic of the credit variety then switching to cash might also make it easier to wean yourself from spending more than you earn. Continually *borrowing-by-swiping* further indentures you to the system, requiring you to maintain the kind of job that pays wages in the fiat currency that allows you to service your debt. Too many Americans can only *service* their debt, not pay it off. I understand that wages have not gone up even as prices have; that makes living within our means more difficult than ever. The conversation we need to have with ourselves is this: “Does shopping and consuming really give me a thrill that is worth the agony of working until the day I die? Do I really need to spend my future to take this item home, right now, today?” We will never get off the debt wheel until we make the hard choices; until we find our satisfaction in life in ways that don’t require borrowing, or until we are able to plan and save for those big-ticket items and avoid credit for *stuff* that lasts hardly a day or week before it is gone, used up, eaten, or thrown aside.

- And lastly (for today’s discussion), there is the small matter of surveillance. Cash is anonymous. You’ve seen the police shows on TV when the officers visit a small shop and ask to see the credit card receipts... it may not quite work that way today, but using plastic leaves a trail that

points directly back to you. And as I have mentioned before: even if you have done nothing wrong, under the rules of the surveillance state today your innocent purchase can be suspect if you are even accidentally contacted by someone who is rightly under suspicion. Innocent until proven guilty? LOL! It is only prudent to leave as little trail behind you as possible.

PLEASE USE CASH AS MUCH AS YOU CAN!

ARMAGEDDON

Here, today, I admit that one of my *vices* is that I am an avid fan of space exploration. In order to keep up on news about what is happening in this field, I subscribe to the “Air and Space” magazine published by the Smithsonian. Each issue has one or two articles about space; the remainder of the articles center on terrestrial flight. This morning I was reading the September 2013 issue when I saw an article about the B-2 *Stealth* bombers, based in Missouri. I was stopped dead in my reading tracks by this sentence: “Since 1993 [the beginning of the B-2 program] new precision-guided weapons have been added to the quiver, and more are on the way, ***including a nuclear-tipped cruise missile.***” [emphasis added]

I want to challenge the notion that merely having nuclear arms is a deterrent to their use. Speaking as a citizen of the only nation to ever use these weapons of mass destruction, in two separate war crimes, I feel that the stronger message America sends when it increases its nuclear capabilities is not a deterrent, but a threat. We are disingenuous when we *say* we will never again use them, when we spend US\$50 billion each year to improve and maintain the largest nuclear arsenal in the world (one that is larger than the rest of the nuclear nations’ stockpiles combined). We are hypocritical when we demand *inspections* of the nuclear facilities of other nations, ostensibly in order to prevent those nations from building these weapons, while we claim righteousness by

way of our adherence to treaties that we wrote specifically to allow our own building program to continue unabated. Imagine that you are a nation (like Iran, for instance), surrounded by nations that have nuclear weapons (Israel) or that are proxies for, and/or hosts of military bases used by (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Afghanistan, for instance) America with its nuclear-full quiver. In this case, deterrence to you looks like your needing to spend precious resources to match the already-existing nuclear threat that surrounds you. Thus deterrence is a way to add nuclear weapons to the planet, not prevent their spread. This is an issue which becomes especially problematic as history grinds on, when regimes and authorities fall as a result of revolution or change hands through democratic processes, and weapons end up under the control of people who have no vested interest in maintaining the status quo of non-use policies and treaties. And we are morally deficient when we spend so much on assuring our ability to destroy nations, the environment, and potentially the entire Earth and yet haven't the will to spend those dollars and resources instead ensuring that all humans can have access to the necessities of food, shelter, and clean water and air.

I have said this before, and here I say it again: we would end the creation of more people who hate America, and who wish to strike back at us through the only means available to them (terror), if we turn our resources away from making bombs and chemical weapons and cluster munitions and actually using all of these abominations, and instead begin to ensure that

every human has access to the bare necessities of life. ***We have a wealth distribution problem:*** our money goes to killing rather than preserving life of all types, be that human, animal, or ecological. Today we threaten nuclear Armageddon when we could, in deference to the needs of our human brothers and sisters, threaten to end poverty and starvation and homelessness. Why is this such a hard concept to understand?

EXCEPTIONALISM

Exceptionalism: the belief that we Americans have been blessed with some sort of gift that allows us to act with impunity by claiming to be only interested in the common good, in democracy and freedom, or in punishing those who violate *international norms*. Of course, part and parcel with this gift is the mandate to be judge, jury, and executioner; a facet of exceptionalism that has become blatant with the use of drones to assassinate not only foreign individuals, but American citizens who are speaking out against the government. In fact, this sense of exceptionalism is so deeply ingrained in us, constantly through the media and the spin placed on news and through the *sanitized* history taught in schools, that you probably have a visceral reaction rejecting this premise that there might be something wrong or inaccurate about this belief. I congratulate you for continuing to read, as most people have already clicked on to some other, more palatable or less challenging piece of drivel.

What is important to note about exceptionalism is its long history on this continent. The first invaders from Europe felt justified in slaughtering the Native peoples they found already ensconced upon the land because they believed they were exceptional. Our Founding Fathers exemplified a belief in exceptionalism as they granted rights to voting and property to only the few *exceptional* landed white men. Looking at every historical turning point throughout American history, you can smell the reek of white supremacy making decisions for

the *betterment* of people who are not white; decisions that only further elevate those in power and grant them the resources they need to remain in power despite those resources having been the property of others. In many cases just in the past century: the two World Wars, Vietnam, Panama, the Philippines, Hawaii, the War on Drugs and the War on ~~Islam~~ Terror to name but a few, racism has been thinly veiled at best, or used to rile up the population into a frenzy of support for the killing needed to plunder other lands.

Some argue that racism should no longer be spoken of, that somehow we have managed to get past that. That sounds just like the average abuser, telling his victim that there is no need to look back, what's done is done and let's move forward. That sounds like the abuser who says the victim is lying. That sounds like the abuser who says that the victim *asked for it*. The fact that the current issue surrounding Syria in particular, and Egypt and Gaza and Afghanistan and Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and Mexico and all the rest, is being fomented by a black President only proves one thing: not that racism is a thing of the past, but rather that racism exists not solely based on skin color, but based also on class. A black President who is firmly entrenched in the upper class will act and respond as any other wealthy white power monger, ***if only to survive with his own wealth and power intact.***

If you truly believe in morality and feel that there are people who need protecting, at least make an effort to be evenhanded and protect everyone. Don't go along with cruise missile

strikes in Syria (especially when the rebels have already been implicated in prior gas attacks without your protest) and drone strikes in Pakistan (that kill unnamed, unknown people who, at the age of 5 and 7, cannot possibly pose a threat to your security here in America) and the building of a wall that claims to be able to stop the refugees undocumented from crossing into the US from Mexico (while leaving the Canadian border in many places even unpatrolled).

If we are to ever see this belief in exceptionalism lead us into another World War, it is easy to see how the Middle East would be the match that lights the explosion. Russia has moved warships in to protect its only foothold in the region; an attack against Syria would be an attack against Russia. This is the part of the whole scenario of a *limited strike* that is the scariest: how personally would Putin take a strike against the weapons Russia has provided to al-Assad? Obviously in his op-ed piece printed in the New York Times, Putin is trying to point out the fallacy of exceptionalism and its potential to lead us into a war we will regret. Is it true that Obama's credibility is so damaged over the *red-line* issue, that his manhood was so challenged by the refusal of Congress to back his plan for war, that he might act unilaterally and flip us all his middle finger? Is this turning into a desperate fight to burnish his image as a *war President* before he leaves office in two years? How much of this is ego, and how much for the good of all people?

And lastly there is one other issue that works to explode the myth of exceptionalism, at least

as far as it being a state of mind that we should want: America is demonstrably exceptional in these ways:

- We are the only country to have used nuclear weapons against a civilian population
- We maintain more nuclear weapons than all other nations combined; enough to end life on this planet many times over
- We spend so much on our military that *the rest of the world combined does not spend more than we do*
- We maintain a stockpile of chemical and biological weapons, and ***are not in compliance with the same international treaty we accuse Syria of violating***, and for what purpose exactly?
- We provide more arms, *including chemical weapons*, to other nations than any other country on Earth
- We use cluster bombs and depleted uranium, both weapons that are banned by international law, and despite the fact that their use is considered to be a war crime
- Our police, neighborhood watches, and vigilantes still, in 2013, kill a person of color without due process of law every 28 hours.
- The criteria we appear to use when deciding who to help and who to hurt is

based on profit or access to resources,
not morality or justice as we claim
Sadly, we are exceptional after all.

REMEMBER WHEN?

[I intend to let you off the hook by the end of this piece.]

Remember when Daniel Ellsberg snuck the Pentagon Papers away from work and finally managed to get someone to publish them? Remember the outrage we felt, that the government had bold-faced lied to us? Remember My Lai? Remember the shame of knowing that American soldiers were intentionally targeting and killing civilians, even women and children?

Remember how we took to the streets to end that war? I use 'we' in that sentence to denote only a portion of our total population; we were certainly not the majority, though we managed to sway a majority to agree that the Vietnam experience was not how we wanted America to act in conflict. Remember believing that Americans stood for freedom and justice, for all? Remember thinking, "Those guys, they torture. We abide by the Geneva Convention, we respect our enemy even in times of war."

Remember how a few of us, and this 'us' is a very small number of people indeed, pointedly asked the question, "Why do you think someone could hate us enough to do this?" in the days following September 11, 2001? You may not, because the media in those days were filled with rising colored threat levels, declarations that the world had changed overnight, and the President's exhortation to "Go shopping!" Reasonable, logical voices were drowned out. Even voices expressing shame and searching for ways to atone failed to rise above the din. When

our retail shopping efforts proved less than adequate, our economy was flooded with cheap money and the resulting housing bubble is what has brought us to our dire unemployment situation today.

Remember the words written by Megan Stack, in her book *“Every Man in This Village is a Liar”*? In particular:

“Here is the truth: it matters, what you do at war. It matters more than you ever want to know. Because countries, like people, have collective consciences and memories and souls, and the violence we deliver in the name of our nation is pooled like sickly tar at the bottom of who we are. The soldiers who don’t die for us come home again. They bring with them the killer they became on our national behalf, and sit with their polluted memories and broken emotions in our homes and schools and temples. We may wish it were not so, but action amounts to identity. We become what we do. You can tell yourself all the stories you want, but you can’t leave your actions over there. You can’t build a wall and expect to live on the other side of memory. All of that poison seeps back into our soil.

And it makes us lie to ourselves, precisely because we want to believe that we are good, we do not want to interrupt a noble national narrative. But there are things we try to obscure by talking about terrorism: things we do to others, and to ourselves. Only the most hawkish

Israelis say that they are oppressing people in order to take away their land. There are other stories to tell; other ways to frame and explain military campaigns. Israelis are looking for security; they are fighting terror; it is ugly but they have no choice. Every nation needs its stories, never more so than in times of war. And so the Israelis tell themselves they are making the desert bloom, that they are the only democracy in the Middle East, a humane land that is sometimes forced to behave inhumanely, and we Americans tell ourselves that we are fighting tyranny and toppling dictators. And we say this word, *terrorism*, because it has become the best excuse of all. We push into other lands, we chase the ghosts of a concept, because it is too hard to admit that evil is already in our hearts and blood is on our hands.”

The local, politically liberal as media goes, newspaper printed last Friday⁹⁹ a short, few paragraph-long brief description of the contents of the latest Wikileaks’ release of Pentagon war logs. It was its first mention of the release, and it hasn’t printed another piece about the *rest* of the contents of the archive, nor of reaction about the release in America or abroad. Where is the outrage over the hundreds of thousands of civilians killed or injured by our war machine? Where is the shame of the lying government and military officials, who seem to have the media in

⁹⁹ This was written 28 October 2010

their back pocket? Where is the help we should be providing those returning veterans; damaged (50% request assistance for treating traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress), often drug- or alcohol-addicted, who end up homeless or, in increasing numbers, dead from suicide¹⁰⁰? Where are the protests, in the media, in the streets, or even around your office water cooler?

Here's where you get off the hook. I believe that one reason we are so complacent, so locked inside the trance of what passes for society today, is that we are seduced into believing that having vented, as I am now doing with this rant, that we have done our part. We think that by expressing our views *in a forum of friends and like-minded people*, in some Internet chat room or on our Facebook page or in a tweet to our handful of followers, that we can salve our conscience and shift any blame onto someone else: the military, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Muslims, politicians, the corporations, even "those people over there".

Oops, now I've changed **my** mind. We **don't** get off the hook. Neither you, nor I, get a free pass on this one. People around the world see how America talks one game and plays another. They see how we allow the multi-national corporations to ruin not only our lives here but also the lives of people everywhere to gain billions of dollars in profit. They see how we turn a blind eye to torture and terror, out of our own deep-seated fear that we will lose any chance we have to fulfill our personal dreams of

¹⁰⁰ Or, as of 2013, dead by suicide-by-cop following mass shootings?

someday being rich. They question the sanity of our airport security theater, while they worry that tomorrow's drone mission might target their home in yet another, horrible, mistake. They fear we will take what used to belong to them, and leave them starving and homeless in their own land. And we, we do nothing to prevent any of this, except rant in an email. We are corrupt. We are to blame. And we are so very, very asleep.

HOW DOES 9-11 CONTINUE TO SHAPE OUR WORLD?

Let's see if I can broach this subject in a manner that allows you to keep reading, and not dismiss me as "just another nutcase". The events of September 11, 2001, have had the largest impact in America of anything that has happened this century. I say this even in light of the 2008 financial crisis; the ramifications of *that* huge event have yet to be fully realized, leaving open the possibility that 9-11 may soon fall to second place. My own personal "HOP Value" is fairly high; HOP standing for "Happened On Purpose". Everyone falls somewhere on the spectrum, from a HOP value of zero: "I believe everything the government said: 19 hijackers, debris brought down WTC 7, some guy who could hardly get a Cessna off the ground managed a direct hit on the Pentagon in a plane that completely burned up..."; all the way to a HOP value of ten: "9-11 was an inside job, and involved GWB as lead conspirator". Now, *inside job* in my opinion does NOT mean that GWB was calling the shots; rather, that there **was a plot**, and the plotters placed (or originated from) people in strategic positions in the military and government, able to use exercises and normal, routine events (like elevator maintenance) as cover for their insidious schemes. There are entirely too many unanswered questions about what happened that day. You could be forgiven for not knowing much about them; certainly the mainstream media has done a very poor job (on purpose, one might imagine) of questioning the official

line. But here we are, eleven years later; why should we continue to care, repeating endless calls for an independent investigation? Precisely because 9-11 has had such a devastating impact on the American way of life, that's why. We do in fact live in a different world because of the actions our government took following that infamous day. I contend that for the most part, these actions are heinous and immoral, and beyond any doubt contrary to the freedom and democracy and constitutional protections that I thought existed in this country.

What are some of the ways our lives are different now? Besides the obvious, two wars later leaving tens of thousands of American lives lost or forever maimed and millions of lives lost in other countries, here is a partial list of impacts arising out of the ashes of that cloudless September morn:

- “War on Terror” is a cardboard cutout obscuring the use of the “Shock Doctrine” in America, and hiding the ever-expanding American hegemony around the globe. The Patriot Act, hundreds of pages detailing a myriad of ways our freedoms have evaporated as if so much steam, was just the beginning. Obviously already prepared and awaiting an event of sufficient magnitude that the American people would have little choice, given their comatose state brought on by consumerism and shallow infotainment, but to acquiesce out of fear to being stripped of constitutional protections. The slumber continues

today even as the newly-signed NDAA subjects activists to oppression and the President manages a kill-list from the Oval Office **decidedly not** open to legal scrutiny or objection. We recently heard the government announce it is beginning a “War on Drugs” on the African continent: training and equipping police forces in most African nations to further the fight against this scourge... or a way to project hard power and place American expertise in the hands of those who seek to protect American economic interests on the last continent with cheap labor?

- Eroded liberty, increased control of the people. Facial recognition is going live at a retail level even as NYC and Microsoft band together to use it in tandem with existing surveillance cameras throughout the city. Drones monitor and record, autonomously and in real-time, all emanations from mobile devices over an entire city. Those who don’t understand the implications of surveillance will be among the first to fall victim to it; those who do are powerless to do anything about it other than stay indoors and off the air. In both cases, our behavior is controlled in new and slippery ways.
- Distractions prevent citizens from being aware of what is going on. Check CNN.com and find out what celebrities are fighting, what they are eating, and

what they are buying. But heaven forbid a news site should convey information about what is actually happening in our world that *affects our lives*. How do movies and television shows reinforce the American sense of entitlement, of individual exceptionalism, of the “fact” that America cannot lose, and that the future can only be brighter than it is today? How many cartoon heroes were stars of blockbuster movies in the last year? Four or five, at least. In the Aurora shooting (July 2012) did your heart cry out when you learned that the youngest victim was 6-years old? Did you question what a 6-year old was doing at a midnight showing of that violent caricature of everyman-as-hero?

- Citizens who question are ignored or ostracized. Thank you for reading this far; most people clicked away at the first mention of HOP value. I suspect that you also have felt the stigma attached to questioning the official hallucination surrounding 9-11; the friends who roll their eyes and quickly change the subject, or worse. We can only plant seeds and hope that one day, enough of them will have sprouted that something will change.
- Lying government has become institutionalized. It is so bad that during the current [2012] Presidential campaign, both major party candidates lie, to the media and the people, with

impunity. When called on it, they shrug and repeat the lie. That is a technique first named by Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels: repeat a lie often enough and it *becomes* true. No one can accept anything they are told by any government official or worker at face value; there is always a subtext and a need to “protect the people” who “can’t handle the truth”. This points to the ultimate crime of Wikileaks: once it can be proven beyond doubt that the government lies, nothing it says can ever be believed. State Department cables prove that enough of what government tells the public is untruthful that we cannot trust anything we are told.

- Secrecy has increased under cover of war. The number of documents now classified is at least an order of magnitude greater than before 9-11: a lack of transparency cannot be a good thing if you value truth. Secrecy is so great, in fact, that even the fact there is a secret court, the rules it uses, and who it ultimately answers to, cannot be discussed by those who know.
- Entrapment and government action is increasingly used as a tool. Prime tools include infiltration and instigation: drugs and guns, in general lead the list; “Fast and Furious” (gunrunning into Mexico by the US government) is just one particular example. Under the sham of “fighting terror”, the only “terrorists”

being arrested are those whom law enforcement has enticed into a plot devised by the government agents, not by the supposed terrorists. Undercover activities have long been a staple of police work; the slippery slope now sees them not only watching, but hatching plots. Where does it stop? As hard- as it is to believe, if the CIA is willing to work with and fund al-Qaida operatives in Syria in 2012, it's not a big leap to see the CIA using false-flag ops to instigate war in Iraq and Afghanistan using al-Qaida as patsies in 2001.

- We see the increasing sophistication of using exercises as cover for plots. Note that in London, the day of the subway bombings there, a scenario was being run that involved *multiple subway bombings*. Note that on 9-11, NORAD was running a scenario involving *simultaneous, multiple airplane hijackings*. [Note: there was a *bomb prevention* drill during the 2013 Boston Marathon, that included the use of bomb sniffing dogs.] In a world of security where information is compartmentalized, where data is shared on a “need to know” basis, running a training exercise that inserts false information into the system allows participants to take actions, in real-time and using real equipment and procedures, that would appear to any who observe it to be part of the training. Training exercises have often been used

to fool an enemy; it is not a far stretch to consider “the people” as an enemy who can be fooled by an exercise.

- The militarization of police. Have you seen your local police force when they turn out for any large crowd lately? Who do you think paid for all that equipment and training? There is a law preventing the military from serving as law enforcement within US borders (*posse comitatus*) without express permission of Congress; the next best thing would be to turn local law enforcement, inherently able to operate with impunity, into a military-like force. This is precisely what has happened since 9-11.
- Democracy is an impediment, an obstacle to be overcome. There is no need for people to be involved in telling government what it can or cannot do. Luckily, the people don't get much say anymore; now our system is one where corporations *buy* the government, not one where people *vote* for it. What a silly, old-fashioned idea: voting!
- Increasing use of contractors as military/security equals less accountability: legal, constitutional, and fiscal. Why use troops that can lead to embarrassing questions from constituents, when you can use taxpayer dollars to buy mercenaries instead? Why subject troops to Geneva Conventions and other maudlin rules of engagement, when you can hire Blackwater? Why

detail expenditures in a budget when a single line item, “Contractors”, hides the truth so much better? And there is an added bonus: allowing corporations to hire and control the workforce tasked with managing data from surveillance operations, business gets to tap this pool of data for their own purposes. Surely you don’t believe that there is a firewall built within companies to contain the data for only governmental use, right? [2013; Edward Snowden was a contractor, not a government employee.]

- A new tactic has surfaced: concede incompetence to hide your real agenda. Better that people think you are a fool (right GWB?) than to let them know what you are up to. Besides, they’ll get distracted by American Idol or Monday Night Football soon enough; and blogging lets us feel like we have made a material difference in the world so we can get back to our real life... or not!

There are more impacts of September 11, including some very real concerns about ethics and morality, or the lack thereof in government these days. The point is, without acknowledging the government is pulling the wool over our eyes in their effort to take away our freedom, we can’t begin to highlight the abuses and oppression that is all the more real with each passing day. Questioning every word that emanates from any level of government is our only path to freedom. The sooner we step out onto that path, the easier it will be. Soon the path will disappear, forever.

ABOUT THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK

Here's the thing: there are several reasons I like the *Flight 93* metaphor. Still today, most people accept the myth of what happened on that plane without wanting to question or disbelieve the government's story. I feel that the way I'm using the Flight 93 *story* doesn't *cement* the myth in their minds; that was done by others long ago. My using it is not going to prevent someone who is close to being a truther from finally becoming one, either. **It is an iconic event:** it is an integral part of the bedrock of the myths around 9/11 and, believe or don't, it is a huge part of the reason most people refuse to question the official story. People doubt that the government **would** do such a thing (kill thousands of its own citizens), **could** do such a thing and get away with it, and in a way even more visceral than with the poor souls in the Towers, people **identify with what it must have been like** for the passengers on Flight 93. Yet despite this focus, few actually get past their own horror and delve into what drove some passengers to rebel, or past the rah-rah of American *exceptionalism* which "*must be the only reason they fought back*", in order to ask how that particular part of the whole myth might hold a lesson that can have some impact on our lives today. What I hope to do with the metaphor is to say, all right, if you believe this myth, what does it really mean? It is about much more than just passengers rebelling; it is about their having knowledge of what was to come, their sense of the futility of inaction, the fact that none had

thought ahead of time what to do in a situation like this, the fact that this event was unprecedented in their memory, *and it's about their will to **do something***, not just go quietly to whatever fate had in store for them. I get that it is patently false; yet because the **myth** is such a deep part of the current American psyche, I find it useful for building the mindset I am trying to presence with my book.

RESOURCES

Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn, “*Race Course*”
Bill McKibbin and 350.org
Charles Eisenstein, “*Sacred Economics*”
Charles Kingsley Michaelson, III’s blog “*Some Assembly Required*” (<http://ckm3.blogspot.com/>)
Beautifultrouble.org
Chellis Glendenning, “*My Name is Chellis & I’m in Recovery from Western Civilization*”
Chögyam Trungpa, “*Shambhala: The Sacred path of the Warrior*”
Chris Martenson, “*Crash Course*” and his blog at peakprosperity.com
Cleve Baxter, “*The Secret life of Plants*”
Clotaire Rapaille, “*The Culture Code*”
Darryl “Waistline” Mitchell, “*Detroit: A History of Struggle, A Vision of the Future*”
David Kocieniewski, **A Shuffle of Aluminum**
David Korten and yesmagazine.org
Derrick Jensen, “*Endgame*”
Don Miguel Ruiz, “*The Five Agreements*”
Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, “*Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*”
Gene Sharp, “*From Dictatorship to Democracy*”
Gregg Braden, “*Deep Truth: Igniting the Memory of Our Origin, History, Destiny, and Fate*”
Gustave Le Bon, “*The Crowd*”
Gustave Le Bon, “*The Psychology of Revolution*”
<http://billmoyers.com/segment/anthony-leiserowitz-on-making-people-care-about-climate-change/>
<http://www.climatecentral.org/blogs/watch-62-years-of-global-warming-in-13-seconds-15469>
James Howard Kunstler, “*Too Much Magic*”
John Geiger, “*The Third Man Factor*”
John Michael Greer

Johnny Barber, and the organization *Voices for Creative Non-Violence*
Lee Camp, leecamp.net
Lierre Keith and Aric McBay, “*Deep Green Resistance*”
Mark Sisson, “*The Primal Connection*”
Michelle Alexander, “*The New Jim Crow*”
Naomi Klein, “*Shock Doctrine*”
Naomi Wolf, “*Give Me Liberty: A Handbook for American Revolutionaries*”
Philip Shepherd, “*New Self, New World*”
Richard Stearns, “*The Hole in Our Gospel*”
Robert J. Gordon, “*Is U.S. Economic Growth Over? Faltering Innovation Confronts The Six Headwinds*”¹⁰¹
Robert Scheinfeld, “*Busting Loose From the Money Game: Mind-Blowing Strategies for Changing the Rules of a Game You Can't Win*”
Robin Meyers, “*The Underground Church*”
Salim Muwakkil, senior editor at “*In These Times*”
Starhawk, “*The Empowerment Manual*”
Timothy Mitchell, “*Carbon Democracy*”
Tom Engelhardt, and tomdispatch.com
www.arlingtoninstitute.org
Zoltan Zigedy

¹⁰¹ at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w18315>

Other books by Derek Joe Tennant include:

Walking Buddha's Path

Derek returns to Thailand to finalize a divorce from his Thai wife. She takes him to a police station instead, where she has bribed officers to put him in jail for 20 years for child molestation, an untrue charge. He tries to call for help and is beaten and severely injured.

A few days later he is placed in a prison outside Bangkok. Derek tries to find the benefit in every situation, and sees the opportunity to grow spiritually from this adversity. Each day he recalls what he has learned about one of the ten paramitas (virtues) of the Bodhisattva Path. He tries to put them into action, even within the confines of his prison life.

A friend from America, a neighbor from Thailand, and US Embassy staff try to locate the missing American. His relationship with Neung, a teenager tasked by the warden with caring for the American while he is imprisoned, deepens quickly before a crisis in Neung's life affects Derek in profound ways.

The spiritual teachings here are useful to any who follow them. *Walking Buddha's Path* is an introduction to a way of being that permeates everyday life and fills it with spiritual energy and delight. One doesn't have to be Buddhist to understand and benefit from this approach to life. These virtues help all who utilize them.

Breaking Trail

As our worldview changes, as our growth in consciousness brings new awareness that we are not separate from each other or our Universe, the old paradigm will be replaced by a new spirituality that recognizes this reality. Not a religion per se, this new spirituality will complement the consciousness that recognizes our connection with all that is. It will guide us

to find our purpose, our heart's goal, and to grow into this new paradigm of consciousness.

Breaking Trail is designed as a 43-day course presenting a spiritual topic each day that you give your attention to on a minute-by-minute basis. You may take each chapter a day at a time, or spend as long as you need with the ideas of one before moving onto the next. Search your heart for answers that are true for you, not what you think others want to hear. It may be helpful to journal about the questions being posed, or you may find that having a trusted partner who is open and willing to discuss these questions with you will help you clarify your thinking and feelings.

Breaking Trail asks that you manifest the change you want to see, that you be a role model, a change agent. New solutions to our problems are required, and that can only come from a new way of thinking and a new understanding of reality. In turn, this leads to a new paradigm, one that speaks to inclusion and awakening to Truth.

Breaking Trail challenges you to begin to sense your connection with all that is. It is filled with questions for you to explore, asking you to pay attention to your world and to awaken to your true nature. Please open your heart and enjoy the journey!

What Color Is Your Sky?

We dance with the Universe, our spirits free to touch the Earth and one another lightly and with loving attention. We learned that attempting to dominate and exploit others, that pushing against the Universe, triggers a fundamental law of physics: for every action, there is an equal reaction. If we want to avoid being slapped by the world, we must keep our touch light and free. Can we blend our energies and begin to move together, rather than in competition?

In “*What Color Is Your Sky?*” we question some of the assumptions that underlie our current, modern, technological society. I offer some solutions as a way to open a discussion, a brainstorming session, an inquiry that hopefully will lead to changes that get us through these troubling times. There is abundant energy in our world for life and for love, if we can but share. Will we pull together in cooperation, or pull apart in conflict? We, the people must speak to this. Change will not come from outside, politicians and corporations will not instigate this change themselves. If we desire a world as we have just pictured it, it falls to us to speak up, to inspire our family and friends, and to begin to take the steps we can to bring it into existence. Change begins when we let go of the old to make room for the new. All around us now, *today*, the old ways of living are cracking and beginning to crumble. What new vision will succeed in oozing through the cracks and into manifestation? Can you add your voice to shaping our future?

2014

George Orwell wrote 1984 and focused upon Big Brother, government propaganda, surveillance and thought control as being responsible for creating a dysfunctional future. In 2014 we look again into the future, one where control is exerted through debt slavery as America copes with the aftereffects of economic disruptions following a solar flare. Winston Smith, in 2014, finds true love that he is forced to betray as he struggles against the machine of economic tyranny.

In The Wake of Disaster: Stories From the Center of Planetary Chaos

Derek has performed paid work for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) following

many hurricanes, including Katrina and Sandy, as well as volunteer disaster relief in the U.S. and Haiti. He also taught English to Burmese refugee children a month following Cyclone Nargis in 2008 while in Thailand. *In the Wake of Disaster* tells what it is like to experience both hurricanes and their aftermath, as well as explaining what FEMA assistance can and won't do for you. It also delves into what you can do today to become more resilient and able to recover quickly should disaster strike your hometown.

All of these books and more are available as free PDF downloads (donations appreciated) on Derek's website: www.derekjoetennant.net

Derek welcomes comments, questions, and suggestions. You may email him using derek@derekjoetennant.net