



# JOURNAL



**2022 CONFERENCE FOR GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION**

**Allowing Vision to Speak | May 20 - 22, 2022**



# THE JOURNAL OF THE 2022 CONFERENCE FOR GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

Allowing Vision To Speak  
May 20, 21 and 22, 2022

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*The 2022 Journal of the Conference for Global Transformation  
is dedicated to*

**BRIAN REGNIER**

*Landmark Forum leader and Wisdom Course Area founder, leader and designer  
1943-2021*

*for his immeasurable love and contribution*



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# FOREWORD

MELINDA VOSS, EDITOR

*There's no doubt the 56 Landmark graduates who contributed papers, Reports from the Field and Discoveries from the Inquiries are at work on fulfilling futures that weren't going to just happen. They're out to open realms the world has never seen before.*

In allowing visions to speak, they had to take many steps. Examine who or what they made wrong. Identify where they slowed down or stopped. Determine how to maintain or restore integrity. Perhaps, most important, *generate* and *create* what it would take to live their lives given by their visions and commitments.

This may not have been easy. Consider the 2021 context: Year two of a global coronavirus pandemic; rising tensions between superpowers; democracy-defying divisiveness; overburdened health practitioners and frustrated public health advocates; protestors standing for what they see as personal freedom swarming the streets; discrimination and inequities of all sorts – racial, socio-economic, aging, sexism, against the disabled to name a few – rearing their ugly heads yet again.

Managing one's own personal well-being through all this was challenging for most, if not all, of us. Indeed, you could have been stopped easily by the state of your life, the condition of your community or world events. If so, start reading this journal immediately. If not, start reading this journal immediately.

You will find some of the most authentic and enlivening accounts of how these graduates of

The Landmark Forum and the Wisdom Course Area contribute to their families, communities, countries and the world. I submit the articles and reports hold the tantalizing possibility of making the world a better place. At the very least, they will educate, enlighten and empower you.

We begin with tributes to our beloved **Brian Regnier**, a Landmark Forum leader and Wisdom Course Area founder. He died Dec. 6, 2021 of complications from Parkinson's disease at age 78. **Rich Schuster** and **Blair Barnett**, two graduates who worked closely with Regnier over the years, recount his remarkable life. Tributes continue from **Werner Erhard**, creator of the est Training and The Landmark Forum; **Helen Gilhooly**, a Landmark senior consultant and a personal coach; and **Harry Rosenberg**, Landmark's CEO.

Also, we've included a piece written by Regnier called "The Power of Listening" that originally appeared in Landmark Insights in 2014. Don't miss it.

**Steve Francis** and **Susan Hoskins** begin the articles section by giving us a glimpse of the Affect Revolution – a new era about discovering our individual capacities for emotional intelligence and personal agency. They look at the impact the Affect Revolution will have on society's vision for itself.

**Diana Page Jordan** captures the unsettled feelings many of us experienced under the isolating conditions of the pandemic and presents a balm that anyone can use. **Cate Hill** offers a provocative and distinct view of the concept of hope.

**Rose Grant** explains what happened after she formulated a promise for a bright world with vibrant ecosystems and reduced carbon dioxide levels and then heard the voice of her 85-year-old self from the future.

Several authors offer personal stories dealing with transformation. From **Anna Choi**, readers will go inside her experience – the ups and downs – of a 10-day silent Vipassana meditation retreat to experience inner peace. **Peg Miller** lays bare her chaotic journey of discovering motherhood before and after overcoming the trauma of emotional, physical and psychological abuse. **Hilary Burns** details what got in the way of allowing her vision to speak and how she overcame various obstacles.

**Kathy Norman** writes with self-deprecating charm about discovering during her “Success: The Power of Context” seminar that she was being stalked by “faceless people who watch everything I do and judge me. I don’t know when they showed up,” she wrote. “Perhaps they followed me out of the womb.”

Also, **Lori Watkins** explores the connection between the latest immigration crisis involving Afghan refugees and her experience of learning she was adopted.

**Tim Hartford** takes readers on an ambulance ride with his distressed heart even though he thinks of himself as a healthy, physically fit guy. **Judith Owens-Manley** examines retirement, another kind of transition looking at some “hinge moments,” defined as “opportunities to forge different pathways in life.”

**Maria Zaharieva** begins with the stark assessment of her life in Bulgaria that she wrote at age 18, “The best thing I can do for the world is to find an original way to commit suicide.” From there, she details the bends and turns on her path that eventually did allow vision to speak.

**Ina Ames** provides a fascinating and informative history of her experience with The Hunger Project and the Holiday Project, both early initiatives stemming from the est Training, a precursor to The Landmark Forum, in the early 1980s.

In another piece looking at Landmark’s influence, **David Flattery, Angela Amado, Gisele Larose** and **Wendy Keilin** report what they discovered in a 2021 survey of participants from the 2021 Conference for Global Transformation. The survey was designed to measure the usefulness of the State of the World Scorecard. Updated at the yearly conference, the Scorecard identifies global areas of interest and importance and how they would be affected if global transformation occurred. Their research backs up their assertion that measurement forwards the action of global transformation.

**Felicia Nagamatsu** entwines her experience and vision for a world that supports “full-spectrum human intelligence,” which takes a broader view of intelligence than is currently understood. She contrasts the way the world operates in “duck world” versus the way it could work with Full-spectrum Intelligence in a “bunny world.” Fascinating.

Several authors wrote of vexing issues that plague our world. In most cases, human behavior, attitudes and ways of being lie at the crux of these issues. For **Daniel Kamanga**, the corruption in Africa is no longer tolerable and he proposes that redefining it as “out-of-integrity” behavior would be more apt to staunch it.

Once **John Hewson**, a Brit who moved to British Columbia, Canada years ago, woke up to the impact of Indigenous people having every 7-year-old child taken from their homes for three generations, he said, “For me, once I see something, I can’t then unsee it.” Compelled to act, he begins a series of steps to redress the wrongs and asks a powerful question for many of us to consider: What can we white settlers do?

**Ket Fox** opens a practical inquiry into individual and global peace even when confronted with violence, disputes or enduring physical pain or discomfort, and offers concrete suggestions for dealing with conflict and generating peace and harmony.

Finally, **Robin Kermode** raises alarms about the impact that the pandemic has had on young people and offers a creative way to address their mental well-being while contributing to the well-being of the earth through rewilding, regenerating and restoring an island, wildlife sanctuary.

We are fortunate to have so many talented people contributing to the journal. I am grateful for the Editorial Review Team – **Scott Wolf, Sel Hwahng** and **True Shields** – who offered invaluable and sensitive feedback to the authors. Then, there's the important work by the Proofreading Team – **Cecilia Burch, Barbara La Valleur, Tracy Hunt, Margie Sherman, Ray Stoddard** and **Susan Bouet** – who help ensure the writing is grammatically correct and conforms to our style guide. The beautiful design and artistic expression in the journal is reflected in the creative work of **Alexandra Isaievych Mason, Michelle O'Gara, Franziska Trauttmansdorff** and **Elizabeth Smith**. And finally there's the invaluable guidance and support from **Susie Fraser**, content manager for the conference, and **Julia Simms**, the conference manager. Each of these dedicated and thoughtful individuals strives to produce the highest quality journal. Thank you.

# BRIAN REGNIER – AN UNLIKELY PIONEER, A WORLD-CLASS LEADER

RICH SCHUSTER AND BLAIR BARNETT

*Brian Regnier, a most unlikely pioneer and leader for a world that works for everyone, has died from complications of Parkinson's disease. His short tenure with us spanned the time from his birth, July 14, 1943, to his death on Dec. 6, 2021, at age 78.*

Regnier leaves behind Tobin White, his husband of many years, and quite a number of people who are family or consider him family.

Regnier grew up in Chicago with his parents, Ardath and Horace Regnier, brother Lloyd, sisters Janice and Gail and surviving sister Cheri Wall. He graduated with a degree in mathematics.

The macrobiotic movement, the baths and the gay scene brought Regnier to San Francisco, where, in 1971, he met Werner Erhard, who created the est Training.<sup>1</sup> He soon went on staff with Erhard and his life was thereafter lived in service of a promise for the transformation of what it means for us humans to be human.

His trajectory as a staff member began as a personal aide to Erhard. Regnier went on to become one of, and the leader of, the highly trained group of people in Landmark known as consultants, whose presence enables the staff to generate themselves as an expression of The Landmark Forum.



Regnier with the Consulting Services Group in the 1980s.

When he retired, he was a Landmark Forum leader, a member of the design team for Landmark's programs and the source of the expression of the Forum known as the Wisdom Course Area.<sup>2</sup>

Regnier is probably best known now for creating the Wisdom Unlimited course and all the programs that have emerged therefrom. Many thousands of Landmark graduates have participated in the Wisdom course, a nearly year-long inquiry into the possibility of a life of ongoing growth and development. Graduates of the Wisdom course have invented and provided leadership on a global scale in countless projects.

Along the way, Brian created groundbreaking



Regnier and the consultants at Marci Willems' wedding in 2019. Willems is the executive of the Wisdom Course Area.

programs and helped develop many others, including programs in the Landmark Coaching Division, programs altering how people create and interact with their day-to-day schedules, programs for people who provide care for the seriously ill, a program redefining the possibility of aging, programs for people who minister, programs that impact how business is conducted and a variety of programs celebrating and expanding self-expression and productivity delivered in vacation settings.

Also, Regnier created the Conference for Global Transformation, an annual gathering that began in 2001. He literally created the Journal of the Conference for Global Transformation, the medium for the communication of this tribute. Perhaps, most important, he created the space for all conference participants to be in relationship. Stunning.

Regnier had great hearing (and an amazing tenor voice), poor eyesight and glasses that made his eyes large, especially when he expressed delight or a laugh. His smile lifted everyone who happened to be around, and he had a quality around him that had people free to be, independent of circumstance.

While those qualities might be spoken of someone who occurred like Mary Poppins, Regnier was down-to-earth. He had a clear view of what's so in any matter under discussion. He spoke the truth, no holds barred. He carried a pocketful of "empty and meaningless" that he applied liberally,



Regnier with his husband, Tobin White.

granting freedom for anyone involved in an undertaking to be effective in their actions.

An avid reader of a wide variety of writers and thinkers, Regnier was a fan of futuristic science fiction. He also had a palate educated in the matter of fine whiskey.

Regnier was a friend, the best you'll ever have, and we are his legacy.

---

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Offered from 1972 to 1985, the est Training was the forerunner to The Landmark Forum, the flagship course offered by Landmark and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs.
- 2 The Wisdom Course Area includes various courses and programs, including Wisdom Unlimited, a nine-month course offered by Landmark.

# TRIBUTES TO BRIAN REGNIER

WERNER ERHARD, HELEN GILHOOLY AND HARRY ROSENBERG

I am celebrating Brian. I am celebrating Brian as the extraordinary Being he is, and for his massive contribution to humanity that will continue over time from both the technology he left us, and from his powerful colleagues.

From close to the beginning of this work, Brian's contribution to our work is awesome.

I want to acknowledge the people that Brian left to carry on his work, especially Tobin White. I use Tobin, as Brian's husband and colleague, to communicate what I would say to all of Brian's staff.

I love Brian, I am complete with Brian, and I am in his debt.

*Werner Erhard*

---

Brian Regnier was a genius and impacted so many people's lives. I first met Brian when I began working with Werner Erhard in January 1975. It was Werner, Brian and me working out of Werner's home office in San Francisco. Brian had the greatest laugh in the world that left everyone around him laughing and relaxed. He would often say, "Anything is possible...no, no ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE!" He was dedicated to justice and equality.

After working with Werner, I moved to the Landmark Center in San Jose, California. Shortly after that, I began training as a consultant along with Brian. We had a very playful relationship and yet he was straight and direct in his communication. It was obvious that Brian would be the source of the consulting area as he

immediately stepped into a leadership role. He became the source of the area and was dedicated to consulting services being available to all of Werner's staff.

I love Brian and miss him, and I know he is always with me.

*Helen Gilhooly, Senior Consultant and Personal Coach, Landmark*

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Brian lived life **big ... really, really big!** Who Brian was is that transformation is possible for the world and he acted on it. As with everything Brian did, he didn't just talk about it, he created an opportunity for it to happen, for people to participate in making it happen and to take on leadership roles to make it happen. Everything he created, he gave away to the staff, program leaders in the Wisdom Course Area and the other people committed to it.

In the 22 years of the Conference for Global Transformation, it has been unequivocally demonstrated that global transformation is possible. You can see that people are at work on transforming the planet, no kidding, and they are making an enormous difference around the world. The conference, which was Brian's creation, makes the possibility of global transformation available to others and it causes people to go to work to accomplish it.

*Harry Rosenberg is the chief executive officer of Landmark.*

# THE POWER OF LISTENING

BRIAN REGNIER

Communication, conversation, language are predominately thought of, anchored in our minds, as an expressing, a speaking, a vocalizing. That outward expression goes far beyond talking, far beyond describing or representing reality—it is in fact what allows for “who” and “how” we are in the world.

It’s what allows for the futures we create, where we evoke experience in others, where our ideas become clear and possible, where we share ourselves and where others are expanded by our participation with them. But speaking is not where things get handled—it’s not powerful enough. The possibility that there’s an edge, the possibility of impact, lies in our listening.

Listening, we often think of as more passive—important, but somehow lesser or secondary. But listening is the clearing in which speaking can occur—without it, there isn’t any speaking. Listening is an action.

It’s way more active than it is passive—it creates speaking. Listening doesn’t receive speaking, it isn’t a receptacle for speaking—it gives speaking. Listening is the possibility for meaning, for understanding.

The possibility for being loved lives in one’s listening; the possibility for learning lives in one’s listening. Listening is what allows others to be—it’s where both the speaker and what is spoken come alive, exist and flourish.

*Brian Regnier was a Landmark Forum leader and Wisdom Area founder, leader and strategist.*



# THREE CHOICE PAPERS

MELINDA VOSS, EDITOR

*The authors of the three choice papers write about vastly different topics – global warming, corruption and creative human intelligence. But one critical thread ties them together. Each author takes a stand for change – or dare we say – transformation in these areas. Each author offers a bright vision for a world that seems quite far from becoming a reality. Yet, all three visions are clearly possible.*

Engage in the deep inquiry that **Rose Grant** has with her 85-year-old self. The paper reflects on the origins, opportunities and merits of seeing such a vision. As she notes, “A personified future can powerfully shape being and acting in the present. It’s an investigation into how we create ourselves and others ongoingly from childhood. It considers fiction and the phenomenon of invisible childhood friends in developing this capacity. It explores the usefulness of characters in creating new futures and touches on the curious faculty of vision.”

As **Felicia Nagamatsu** sees the world, unleashing a large wave of creative human genius is within our grasp. A mindset and method are available that promote genius. But millions – or is it billions – are held back by standard, conventional thinking about how we view “Normal Intelligence.” This approach crushes creative genius that goes unrecognized and wasted, making it less likely that

we can solve various vexing issues. She proposes a better way and explores a possible future called full-spectrum human intelligence that could become the new norm in a flash, if only people would see the “bunny” instead of the “duck.”

**Daniel Kamanga** singles out corruption as undermining his foundation’s vision for an Africa that works for everyone. He argues that current anti-corruption efforts are insufficient to deal with corruption primarily because they are piecemeal strategies. He makes an audacious call for creating a corruption-free Africa by redefining corruption as an out-of-integrity action and building a bedrock for integrity throughout the continent. It is a strikingly bold vision that if brought to reality could lead the way to eradicate corruption in other countries.

Despite the odds, they put stakes in the ground on these global concerns. Also, by allowing their visions to speak in this year’s journal, they put themselves on the line. Inevitably, after reading these papers and others in the journal, one must ask: What am I putting at stake for my life and the world? But seek inspiration first by reading and taking in the depth and breadth of these provocative possibilities.

Each year, we select three papers as the top three or “choice” papers in the year’s journal. The editorial review team, content manager for the conference and conference manager take part in making the selections. Once the authors of the top three papers are identified, they are invited to plan and present a joint breakout session at the Conference for Global Transformation. At the conference, one of the three authors receives an award for what is judged to be the best paper in that year’s journal.



# THE CALL FOR AN AFFECT REVOLUTION: CREATING THE EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPES OF OUR LIVES

STEPHEN W. FRANCIS AND SUSAN H. HOSKINS

*"We cannot solve our current problems with the same level of thinking we used when we created them."*

— Albert Einstein

## **ABSTRACT**

*The authors assert that we are entering the Affect Revolution, a new era about discovering our individual capacities for emotional intelligence and personal agency. In this article, they inquire about the impact the Affect Revolution will have on society's vision for itself. It seems clear, as a society, we are not good at managing or even noticing our own emotions. Also, despite major technological advances, we are the most*

*addicted, obese, stressed out and medicated generation in history. In this article, we inquire about the vision that society would speak if we were on the other side of the Affect Revolution with our full emotional capacities. What impact will the Affect Revolution have on society's vision for itself? What are the elements, distinctions and emotional capacities that we would have to master as individuals and as a society?*

## **THE CALL FOR AN AFFECT REVOLUTION**

To date, humanity has used evidence-based research to solve many of the world's most challenging problems resulting in such advances as the development of antibiotics, eradication of smallpox and mapping of the human genome. These accomplishments come from the scientific method which is only possible because of our

intelligence. Despite these advances, we are no closer to solving social problems, such as religious freedom, immigration and racial equality. Such problems are different because their roots involve how human beings are emotionally wired.

We assert that we are just beginning to understand our emotional makeup. The purpose of what we call the Affect Revolution is to continue to define, promote and use various elements, distinctions and emotional capacities. In short, we can expand and enhance our knowledge of emotions. It is important to understand that emotional intelligence is a specific trait, and emotional agency, emotional literacy and empathy are critical elements of emotional intelligence.

Just as language literacy was important to the advancement of society during the industrial revolution, emotional literacy is important as artificial intelligence continues to replace workers. After all, the emotional messages that pass between people in the simplest social situations are too sophisticated for artificial intelligence to mimic as Daniel Goleman pointed out in his 1994 book, "Emotional Intelligence."<sup>1</sup> As a result, all kinds of jobs – some yet to be created – will require that workers at all levels operate by using higher levels of emotional intelligence and not just technical skills.

Right now, companies have to work with different models of employee engagement. But they also need to acknowledge the human cost of working in organizations. Too often, employers – especially large companies – fail to allow for that acknowledgment.

The old model where the employees sacrifice their time, health and families for the benefit of the organization has proven to be too costly. As a result, organizations find it harder to employ high-performing workers willing to put up with an emotionally dissatisfying life without compensation for the emotional cost workers continue to pay for dissatisfying and toxic workplaces.

## **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

In 1990, two American professors, John Mayer and Peter Salovey, were researching ways to scientifically measure the difference between

people's emotional abilities. In a paper, they coined the phrase *emotional intelligence*.<sup>2</sup> Since 1990, numerous researchers have built upon this initial work and expanded the depth of knowledge in this area. In 1995, Daniel Goleman popularized the phrase by titling his book "Emotional Intelligence." Now, decades later, this thinking is becoming embedded in our day-to-day vocabulary.

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to understand and acquire information that our emotions provide us. Emotions are tools that give us information about how we are responding internally rather than what the world is doing to us. This information can be thought of as dials on the dashboard of a car. We cannot drive our car safely without knowing which direction we are heading and how fast we are going.

Emotions provide similar information. For example, anger is an emotion that lets us know when someone or something has crossed one of our boundaries. When we get angry, we have the opportunity to address the transgression or reevaluate our boundaries. By redefining anger as valuable information, we can take the emotional charge out of the situation and give ourselves more facility in the face of anger.

The most basic indication of using your emotional intelligence is knowing what you are feeling and understanding how it is affecting you. Here's a scenario:

I walked into a patient's room in the emergency department. I asked how the patient was feeling and he immediately reveals his suspicion by asking me why I'm in his room and what do I want from him. He then proceeds to yell, "If you walk out of this room, I'll call your supervisor." The patient demands to know how much longer he has to stay in the hospital. The patient then gets up, walks across the room and grabs the paperwork that explains why he is involuntarily committed to the hospital.

I feel anger. Anger because I feel that a boundary has been crossed. I believe I am there out of a concern for the patient and feel like I was ambushed by suspicion, disrespect and hatred. I am aware that I am feeling anger and I know that I feel that my intentions and

competence are being questioned. Two things that I am sensitive about. Because of this insight I am able to hold my actions in check while I navigate myself out of the room.

This is emotional intelligence in action.

Our inability to use our emotions fluently has been killing us for generations. For example, consider the shootings that happen over arguments involving a few dollars or a hurtful remark, or the thousands of people who use drugs and alcohol to numb themselves rather than deal with the emotions that come up in their daily lives.

Consequently, an overwhelming need exists to develop our emotional intelligence as individuals and a society. The Affect Revolution is a movement to address our emotional makeup in a practical way, thus allowing anyone to become emotionally literate.

### **THE AFFECT REVOLUTION OCCURS IN YOUR SEAT**

How life occurs to us depends on the perspective we create as Dave Logan and Steve Zaffron assert in their 2009 book, "Three Laws of Performance."<sup>3</sup> The same holds true for the emotional landscapes we have created. The idea that we create our emotional world is radical. A conventional interpretation of life holds that the quality of our lives is the result of chance, circumstance and effort.

The reality is that most of us feel we are victims of our past, circumstances and biology. However, this idea is just one way to interpret our experience. The Affect Revolution asserts that individuals play an active role in how life occurs to them and, therefore, have a say in how the events around them unfold.

This is consistent with the current research which indicates that our emotional environment is a result of our biology, environment and culture, as Goleman asserts. Also, as research by Brené Brown, a popular American academic, shows the quality of our life is determined primarily by our perception of ourselves and the roles we have decided to play in events around us.<sup>4</sup> This supports the idea that we have a choice as to how

events around us occur. To have a choice, we must notice that our *interpretation* of events affects the quality of our lives.

The first step in understanding our emotions is noticing when they show up. Though easy to understand, this concept is difficult to carry out because it requires that an individual notices who they are being in the moment. Are they being angry, or are they noticing that they are angry? Who a person is being will determine how the world occurs to them. *Noticing* being angry grants a person agency over their anger whereas simply being angry leaves the emotion in control. This realization is the onset of emotional agency.

### **EMOTIONAL AGENCY**

Emotions provide us with information about how we are doing on the inside and not what the world is doing to us. That's an important distinction. Too often, we forget that our emotions simply constitute that internal gauge of how we're reacting to external factors. Emotional agency can be best described as the ability to carry out actions or interventions in order to produce a particular effect around emotions for ourselves and others. This can include inspiring, enrolling and leading others through the use of our emotions.

This can be accomplished only by being responsible for the feelings we leave others with and bringing about the changes we experience in ourselves and the world around us. This requires that we have the insight, desire and ability to act upon our lives and cause change. To accomplish this, an individual must maintain an ongoing inquiry into who they are intellectually, emotionally and psychologically.

This may occur to some as an overwhelming task, but the reality is that each of us already spends most of our energy struggling to interpret events unfolding in our lives and navigating these events as best we can. Developing agency begins to reveal how we create the emotional landscapes that make up our life and gives us the added bonus of having a say in how it goes.

Emotional agency does not mean control over one's emotions. Emotions are not something to be controlled as much as they are to be viewed as information that allows us to get the results

we want and live a more satisfying life. Emotional agency requires that individuals understand that they are self-directed, generating the results and outcomes in their lives despite the circumstances.

To gain agency over one's life, an individual must embrace a different framework and language to create the possibility of change. Given that language has the power to define our experience, how we interpret and label emotions determine how those emotions occur to us.<sup>5</sup>

Armed with a new framework and language, we can begin to gain insight into how we are naturally designed to think and feel. As a result, we could spend less time suffering the consequences of our life and more time enjoying who we really are.

This requires that an individual be able to distinguish the difference between what they feel and how they occur for themselves and others around them. Mastering emotional agency provides an individual with the ability to establish boundaries, set expectations and communicate clearly. It also allows them to be sensitive to what they leave others with in their emotional wake. Here's a before and after example:

**Before:** I went to four high schools in three years. I was born in Thailand and grew up in Africa. I told myself that I would never fit in. I didn't belong. When I got homesick, there was not one place in the world where I can find my friends. Many of them didn't know each other. Some people thought I was odd. I was a quiet misfit who needed to hide behind my mother's skirt. Always insecure.

**After:** I took on my own agency and redefined and reimagined the facts. I am worldly and cosmopolitan speaking five languages. I am adept with being in unfamiliar cultures and introducing myself to new people.

This kind of reimagining is what is wanted and needed in our society today. People should take time out on a weekly, or even daily, basis to cause their own agency by discovering and redefining their strengths and capacities.

## EMOTIONAL LITERACY

Emotional literacy refers to the ability to use the information that our emotions provide in

the moment and to respond in a satisfying and connected way. Emotional literacy refers to a set of skills that fall into four areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management.<sup>6</sup>

A good example of emotional literacy is joke telling. To tell a good joke, a person must be able to sense how others are responding as they are telling the joke. They must know when to pause, exaggerate or speak softly for maximum effect.

Emotional literacy skills fall into four areas:<sup>7</sup>

1. **Self-management** – Controlling impulsive feelings and behaviors, taking initiative, following through on commitments and adapting to changing circumstances.
2. **Self-awareness** – Being proactive, searching and recognizing our emotions and how they affect our thoughts. For example, thinking about our thinking or having feelings about our feelings can lead to knowing our strengths and weaknesses.
3. **Social awareness** – Understanding the needs and concerns of others. Detecting emotional cues, reading body language and recognizing the power dynamics in a group or organization.
4. **Relationship management** – Being able to develop and maintain healthy relationships, communicating clearly, influencing others, working well on a team and managing conflict.

## EMPATHETIC SKILL SET

We are gregarious creatures naturally wired to connect to others and feel what they are feeling.<sup>8</sup> This ability to connect is the primary catalyst in the development of empathy and a result of our evolution. For example, a newborn baby can sense if an adult is kind or hostile. If someone is being hostile, the baby will crawl away for its own safety.

Empathy is our most valuable natural resource for conflict resolution. Empathy ensures that we can hear, understand and feel the perspectives of others. Without empathy, democracy and civil society would not be possible.<sup>9</sup>

Emotional intelligence, emotional literacy and emotional agency are three elements of emotional awareness. These elements can be understood and studied separately, but they are only effective in the presence of empathy. Empathy opens the door to others. It allows us to feel what others are feeling. For example, emotional intelligence, emotional literacy and emotional agency plus empathy results in compassion and understanding of others.

In Western culture, empathy is not well understood or encouraged. As a result, this ability falls away when children get older largely because the emphasis shifts to other skills. This is important because empathy is not an emotion. Empathy is a set of skills that allows us to feel what another person is feeling and respond appropriately. These skills fall into two areas, cognitive and affective.<sup>10</sup> See below.

Cognitive Skills	Affective Skills
Incorporating the thoughts of others without judgment	Being present and at ease with awkwardness and not knowing
Imagining what others are thinking	Feeling what others are feeling
Responding with appropriate thoughts	Responding with appropriate feelings
Being accountable	Being vulnerable, able to tolerate awkwardness

### THE VISION OF THE AFFECT REVOLUTION

The Affect Revolution is a movement driven by the need to understand our emotional and psychological makeup so that anyone can create the possibility of individual emotional literacy for themselves. The Affect Revolution is an open inquiry into who we are as emotional beings with the commitment of focusing on the energy between people so that all people feel seen, heard and valued. The commitment of the Affect Revolution is to create a world that promotes literacy and agency in the area of emotional intelligence.

The vision of the Affect Revolution is that we live in a world where emotional literacy is a primary virtue and all people feel seen, heard and valued; where individuals contribute to, and benefit from, their communities without judgment and interactions with others are a source of strength, inspiration and creativity.

On the other side of the Affect Revolution, the emotional landscapes we create are exciting environments where emotions are tools rather than burdens. Where disappointment is transformed into the opportunity to live fully and regret is a reminder to be kind.

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# AN UNEXPECTED GIFT: THE BLOSSOMING OF OLD TALENTS AND NEW VISIONS

DIANA PAGE JORDAN

## *Abstract*

*Numerous studies that focus on the power of nature back up the sensory exploration of a seemingly ordinary walk. When COVID-19 initially sent humans indoors and a few ventured out, vision, particularly, became vivid. The studies indicate that we discover the healing properties of nature after connecting as little as two hours a week.*

An unpredicted sensory world bloomed out of a time of terror in March 2020. Daily living didn't look the same. We tried on, struggled with and visited the term "What's so." My go-to for emotional roller-coasters was always dance class, and that's when my gym closed. I figured, "Fine, I'll dance online." But, once that first class ended, a powerful, overriding sadness enveloped my heart.

Living alone, with family and friends spread from 20 miles to thousands of miles away, I wondered about the others in my nearby world. I gazed out my second-floor apartment windows and saw no one on the field, paths or even parking lots nearby. The only noise I heard were the questions in my head. "Where is everyone? Are we safe? Am I safe living so alone?"

The quiet eerily crept under my skin, erupting in a compelling urge to get out into nature. I sensed, but didn't know then, that studies show being in nature reduces stress. We're less anxious, less fearful. A 2012 study by Catharine Ward Thompson, a professor of landscape architecture at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland and her

co-authors, found that the people who lived near larger areas of green space reported less stress.<sup>1</sup> Their bodies showed greater declines in levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, during the day.

It seemed as if my body soaked up the fresh, intense pain of the world. If I moved, I thought, maybe the extreme sadness would fall away, like slipping off the shroud now wrapping our planet. This intuitive sense is consistent with science. Another study of 20,000 people by researchers from the University of Exeter in England showed participants more likely to report good health and psychological well-being after just two hours a week out in nature.<sup>2</sup>

On that first day, I walked close to five miles after online dancing. Highly unusual for me. Also, I danced the next day and walked another three to five miles. It turned into a pattern, a gift, logging more than 650 daily doubles as of the dawning of 2022, and counting.

No doubt my endorphins bounced up, thanks to the increased movement. Researchers at

the Mayo Clinic have documented the power of the brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, noting that exercise emulates the body's fight-or-flight response, resulting in stress relief.<sup>3</sup>

The stillness of the outside world felt overwhelmingly loud. The quiet, ironically, blasted my senses, penetrating my being. Similarly, the absence of the typical suburban traffic startled me. Streets were deserted. Without the cars and the gasses pouring out their tailpipes, the skies blazed a stunning blue. The Portland, Oregon area's own Mount Hood sat vividly before me, about 50 miles away and seemed close enough to touch. Birds playfully dive-bombed near me. Squirrels scooted teasingly across the quiet paths.

I fell in love with what I hadn't before noticed. Grateful for this silver lining in a world nearly demolished by pain and uncertainty, I got that I had a choice. I could embrace my newly perceived vision of every sense coming alive.

Accompanied by a backpack, my AirPods, a mask and my Skechers, I walked truly seeing the world as if I had never seen it before. I listened to podcasts, free webinars and classes about everything from books to business.

### **MAGICAL ACCOMPANIMENT**

So, it was a happy accident to listen to the words of a photographer more than 2,500 miles away, gracefully interacting with her own quieted world. As I walked the mostly suburban streets, I heard Franziska Trauttmansdorff speak of her native Austria, her move to Ontario and how she had abandoned her initial career of photography for sales, road shows and trade shows. If not for the pandemic, she hinted, she likely would have not come full circle, returning to her cameras. Eventually, Trauttmansdorff's photography would grace the cover of this year's Journal of the Conference for Global Transformation.

At the beginning of the pandemic, like so many employees, Trauttmansdorff found her sales job permanently silenced. She responded by picking up her camera again to begin shooting images in her own neighborhood. She says, "I call it my COVID[-19] gift, because I really rediscovered my art."

Trauttmansdorff spoke to Dr. Fred Moss, as

he interviewed her on Sept. 16, 2021, for his "Welcome to Humanity" podcast.<sup>4</sup> She talked of how she started shooting again in her own backyard. I listened intently, recalling how I had shot video stories a few years back at a TV station in New York, a slice of my career that included anchoring the news and interviewing authors for the AP Radio News' 800 stations. I admired Trauttmansdorff's attention to detail. I could see, in her descriptions, the ospreys, hummingbirds, the eight eagles' nests and the bees swollen with the pollen they'd collected.

### **WHERE THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S STORY BEGAN AGAIN**

The bees. I'm listening as Trauttmansdorff says that's where she revives her photography. One day, she spots a few bees in her mother's vibrant pink hibiscus flowers. She zooms in, shooting so intimately, noticing that when the bees stick out their tongues, those tongues actually split into three pieces.

She worries that bees are beginning to disappear from our ecosystem. "So, my idea is that if you inspire people with beauty and hope, then there's something that can be done about it."

Trauttmansdorff is not alone in that desire. A Norwegian University of Science and Technology study on activist art about climate change suggests that art can inspire action.<sup>5</sup> Nature, like life, is unpredictable. She tells of her search for a screech owl. Instead, she looks up to see nearly 20 bald eagles flying in a cluster. They are migrating.

As I'm listening to her, at that moment, a murder of crows flies over my head. One crow lands a few feet away atop a small tree. I pay attention again to Trauttmansdorff's narrative. Now, she is on to the story of a hummingbird. It sweeps, she says, landing in a pink flower – and it can't get out of the flower. She shoots, pushing the power button to keep taking pictures. She notices a yellow garden spider has spun a web, blocking the hummingbird's escape.

Later, she eyes her photos. The spider in the web is sharp. The hummingbird is sharp. She says of the wildlife in all her photos, "I want people to be inspired to take care of our wildlife."

## WE CREATE OUR MAGIC WHILE IN MOTION

"When we are in action," Trauttmansdorff says, "we are part of the beauty and the healing." I hear these words and am grateful for these daily walks, each one a different path, never repeating the journey from the day before. Eyes fresh every moment.

I listen again. "When you have a vision of going to take pictures of an osprey, you get present," Trauttmansdorff says. "And you manifest it somehow. Like the other day, I said, 'OK, today, I'm going to see the bald eagle, and he's going to land in front of me and he's going to catch a fish.' And, I got into it, and it literally happened."

She reflects on her sales job that vanished with the pandemic and says, "Being able to take my camera and just go out there and find beauty and take these amazing photographs really helped me to focus on what is important, something bigger about life."

As I walk, flirting with birds that fly nearby, waving to toddlers who always seem to smile back and playfully nudge small stones through imaginary goalposts, I feel peaceful. That expression is made more vivid by Trauttmansdorff's pandemic-induced gift, an unprecedented offering that we share in our own individual ways.

"When you take your camera, you just go out there, and you become part of the magic." As I hear these words from Trauttmansdorff, I get that we can choose to be immersed in the beauty of this planet, expressed in vibrant colors and songs. I punctuate the thought with a trio of ballet turns along the sidewalk and a nod to the health benefits of my serendipitous journey.

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# HOPE IS NOT A FOUR-LETTER WORD – THE ROLE OF HOPE IN THE VOICE OF VISION

CATE HILL

## **Abstract**

*This paper examines the concept of hope, what it is and what it isn't, and offers examples from the author's life of how hope ultimately led to actions on fulfilling her dreams. The paper asserts hope plays a critical role in our lives as the very foundation for creating possibility and allowing vision to speak.*

Recently, I was in a course with a group of senior Landmark graduates, people who had been around the work of Landmark for years, when I heard a participant say, "We don't traffic in hope here." The comment struck me as out of place and laid a shroud of cynicism over the space that had just been brimming with possibility.

I'd heard comments like this before. Hope lives for some Landmark graduates as useless, nothing more than wishful thinking. I'm clear that's what people mean when they look at hope as a bad thing. They make hope wrong as a concept, view it as a bad word. That seems odd to me, a discouraging way to look at it. Would any of us still be here without hope?

What is it that gives life to vision, allows it to

speak? Why do we say yes to the next course for growth and development? What has us stand at the front of a roomful of people in that course, including strangers, and share our dreams? What draws out declarations of some promising future? Maybe you'll answer that it's possibility. But from where does possibility arise?

In my own life, hope has had a regular role in awakening possibility and propelling me forward to create what I want.

For example, in the midst of starting my business in 1993, I opened an old college textbook looking for a solution for some problem I've now forgotten. It doesn't matter what it was. What I found in that old book was unexpected and exactly what I needed to see in that moment.

Tucked in my book on a random page was a list. It was a wish list actually, a record of my desires for the future of my life.

- Finish college
- Pass the CPA (certified public accountant) exam
- Get a great job
- Get married
- Buy a nice house
- Start a business
- Have a baby

A young woman in the 1950s might have had a different list, one that stopped with the husband, kids and nice house. A young woman coming of age in the 1960s may have seen those goals as a sellout to “the establishment.” A young woman creating her way in the 1970s may have found this list unexciting. In the 1980s, when I was actually looking ahead to my perfect life, my dreams reflected the hopes and dreams of any number of women like me who thought we could have it all.

Now, I see one common thread about all the items on my list, one thing true about all of them. They all happened. Everything had come to be and nearly in the order I listed them. I was living the life I created, bullet by bullet.

### **I HOPE IT DOESN'T RAIN THIS WEEKEND**

I realize my list may seem unremarkable, filled with ordinary things that were likely to happen anyway. I had desires with an expectation for success. In other words, I had hope. Desires without a healthy expectation for a good outcome would have left me with the opposite of hope, or despair.

I was pretty sure I'd get married. Plans for that were past hope and living in optimism. Odds were good for a baby, too, although five years passed, and I literally didn't deliver. Over those five long years, I became sadly familiar with the ache of my empty uterus every time my thoughts said it was time to give up. The thoughts I entertained opened a hole in my belly, but the thoughts lied. In reality, it was not yet too late for me. In reality, hope was not lost, but as my thoughts persisted and I toyed with believing them, grief arose and turned hope to dread. I turned my attention to where I had more control, my business.

My business was born in my mind in the 1980s. In 1993, it still lived in my mind inside a shelter of hope. In 1993, my thoughts of a viable business were weaker than my thoughts of fear and failure. *What if I couldn't do it? What if I did it and failed?*

I found a way to ignore the thoughts and fed hope by gathering evidence for success. I'd been through difficult times before and knew I had the stomach and tenacity for the challenge of entrepreneurship. I was confident in my skills, having spent the last several years as a medical

practice manager for a teaching hospital, perfect training for my consulting and medical billing practice. I was a certified public accountant and those credentials would help me sell my business to doctors.

Hope grew, and I began to take actions. I wrote a business plan. Two months later, I celebrated the launch of a new practice management consulting and billing business, *my business*, with a \$100 deposit in a new commercial bank account. Just a few weeks later, I received my first bank statement in the mail. While I could have been underwhelmed by the new balance that was 40 cents bigger with interest, I allowed myself to feel the thrill of progress.

I phoned a friend to share my delight that the business was making money already, and I allowed that interpretation to forecast my ultimate success. At the time, the success of my business still lived in hope, not yet optimism, but I allowed this little piece of evidence, this little story of success resulting from my actions, to bolster my confidence. The possibility of failure still nagged me, yet I remained hopeful. From those seeds of hope, my business soon grew from one employee working in my basement to four full-time employees and leased office space.

Fast-forward two years and I was sitting in the parking lot at the bank weeping into my phone to the same friend who had rejoiced with me at that first 40 cents of new income. This time I was sick with worry that I would not have the money to make payroll that week. My friend asked, “Why don't you just sell that damn business?”

Her words took my breath away. Dread overwhelmed me this time, and it had a real chance of edging out any hope I had to succeed. Her remark confirmed my worst thoughts and increased the volume on them – *you're going to fail. It's too hard.* My chest tightened. Throat closed. I felt my heart pound hard, pumping blood to my brain and thumping in my head. A funny blur came over me as though I was underwater.

As bad as this sounds, these reactions drowned out the sound of my friend's voice and quieted the frightened voice in my head. Suddenly, I realized this situation was a blip, a problem I could address,

and not a reason to abandon my commitment. I resurrected my belief that I could make the business work and let it dissolve the thoughts of failure. I heard my vision speaking again.

During the years I developed and ran my business, hope inspired me, provided momentum and carried the weight of the actions I took during those years. Hope allowed my vision to speak louder than the voice of failure.

Oxford Languages defines hope as “a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen, a feeling of trust.” Wikipedia says, “Hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one’s life or the world at large.” Webster.com defines hope as a verb – “to cherish a desire with anticipation: to want something to happen or be true.”

Now what about possibility? The Merriam Webster Dictionary says, “the condition or fact of being possible.” Oxford Languages says, “a thing that may happen or be the case.” How can we imagine *some thing* could be possible unless we start with a desire for “something?” That “something” evolves from the spark of hope.

It’s hope that ignites possibility. It’s hope that draws a tear (or a flood of them) when someone shares with me something beautiful and moving. For example, the man who shares that he’s reconciled with his father after 20 years of not speaking to him gives me hope that my own broken relationships might be mended. The woman who shares her discovery that her son’s unexpected choices do not mean he’s rejecting her lets me see the beauty of my own sons finding their expression in life.

A woman sharing that she’s overcome adversity gives me kinship, the comfort of knowing I’m not the only one facing challenges and setbacks. If passive, that kind of hope is just wishful thinking but if I allow it to spark action, it pulls me out of my chair and signs me up for the next course, transforms my dreams and keeps me going. Hope enrolls me, makes me believe I can make a difference, drives me to reach for my dreams and allows my vision to speak.

We may not recognize hope in the realization of

ruthless truth or the sight of heartbreaking beauty or of goodness momentarily concealed, but I almost always see it in hindsight. Hope comes to life and delivers confidence when I share it and create membership in the possibility derived from it. Keeping hope to myself, staying quiet until I experience confidence, as I have often done for fear of looking naïve or stupid, drowns it in a thousand thoughts and kills off any chance of allowing vision to speak.

Hope is linked to the past, springing from confidence and optimism, memories of the happiness that comes with succeeding. The accomplishment of getting my degree while working full time. Remembering the letter that announced I passed the CPA exam on the first try. The risk of accepting a job I might not be quite qualified for and excelling at it. These are all examples of past accomplishments that gave me the strength I needed to hang in there with my business, even when I thought I might fail. I felt the promise of each victory and I wanted more.

Hope gets us out of bed in the morning. Thoughts for a great day, like a child awake at dawn on Christmas morning hoping that Santa came through during the night. Thoughts about getting to the other side of a tough day, like startling awake at 3 a.m. dreading a difficult conversation with a client. Knowing we’ve survived hard times supports hope.

Once I lost a client who represented nearly 60 percent of my business. I had to tell my nervous staff we’d get through it. I had no evidence that we would, only hope and the knowledge that I survived challenges before. We did get through it, and the experience reinforced my belief that I could get through tough times again. Hope is fundamental to living as a human being.

Hope is often productive as an active approach to life and usually arises when we have a specific goal in mind. The experience of hope may exist in pretending or wishing or fooling yourself, but I assert that hope as wishful thinking often results in disappointment. Had I not taken action upon learning about the loss of a big client or had I relied only on hoping for the best, my business might have suffered an early death. For me, hope has been most effective when my dreams live

bigger than I suspect I can manage and I don't lose sight of what's so.

Hope is the belief that things will work, especially when it seems otherwise. Hope sits next to its flipside, which is dread and will overpower dread if you let it. When my mother told us she had cancer, the whole family embraced hope. My mom accepted treatment because of hope. Hope gave her and us the strength we needed to get through that difficult time. My vision that she would beat cancer wasn't realized the way I wanted it, and, still, I'm grateful for the hope that supported us through her illness.

Hope gives voice to vision when desires and emotions align and cause action. Determination can cause the same result without the experience of hope if enough confidence is present. If we're that confident, hope isn't a consideration, dread is absent, and sheer determination can deliver results. Even then, at some point, some level of hope likely played a role.

I hope it doesn't rain this weekend. I hope I win the lottery. There is no expectation for success, no fear of failure and no action. I have no belief and no hope. I'm not delusional, happily spending all my savings on everything but an umbrella in expectation of a lottery check and a sunny weekend. I'm not invested at all, and so these thoughts are nothing more than wishful thinking, casual desires and a fun indulgence. Hope as delusion, without faith and action, equals wishful thinking, dreamy thoughts that are useless for getting anything accomplished.

## I HOPE STEVE JOBS IS AS SMART AS HE SEEMS

*"You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something — your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life."*

— Steve Jobs

My friend, who suggested I sell the damn business, meant well. She wanted to see me relieved from the stress enveloping me, and maybe she was sick of hearing my complaints and sad stories. I heard her advice and wondered if she was right. My body sensations and emotions aligned with her *just-end-it-all* point of view and it would have been easy to surrender to the dread and let it all go.

Instead, I paused and looked for what was real. I knew about the low rate of success for new businesses. What was it, what quality existed that buoyed those who did succeed? Did I have that quality, too? It occurred to me that sheer determination might allow my vision to speak. *Chutzpah!* The possibility for success was still alive, even in the face of this challenge, even if all I had was chutzpah. I didn't want to quit. I wanted to give substance to my vision. I had more than chutzpah. I had hope.

Hope is the seed for possibility. Where hope glimmers, vision emerges. Where actions follow, vision speaks. Possibility, as Landmark creates it, sets us in motion and keeps us in the game when failure seems imminent.<sup>2</sup>

That day at the bank, failure seemed inevitable, yet I could see that the failure existed only in my thoughts. My heart responded to those thoughts of failure and ached as if the failure had already occurred. How easy it would have been to quit then. I didn't.

The road toward my goal had been unpredictable, bumpy with difficult clients, unreliable employees and frequent changes in medical billing rules. What I discovered is that getting through without suffering required releasing any emotional attachment to a specific outcome. Attachment in this manner subverts trust and triggers the voice in my head. *I didn't expect this.* My heart believes the voice and aches. More thoughts: *It's too hard. I'm too stupid. What was I thinking?* Hope fades, vision weakens.

Notice that my thoughts led to a physical reaction – heartache and stress – in my body. In writing about the role of thoughts in disease transmission, Dr. Joe Dispenza, a chiropractor and international lecturer who has done post-graduate training in neuroscience and neuroplasticity, mind-body

medicine, and brain/heart coherence, asks: If our thoughts can create a physical stress response, real body reactions, can our thoughts also create healing?<sup>3</sup> He asserts that creating cohesion between our thoughts and our hearts will provoke healing. I felt it. My stressful thoughts created stress in my body. Hopeful thoughts created energy and a desire to cause action.

In building and sustaining my business, I never pretended that I would succeed. I *believed* that I would. I believed the business would stay vital. I trusted that getting through challenging moments and keeping my eye on my vision would bring success. I didn't have a clear view of how the dots would connect, yet I knew they would. I knew it in my heart and mind. The heart/mind cohesion brought me back to hope. The strength of hope overcame the dread.

You can't connect the dots by looking forward. You can't stand in a situation and know how your actions will impact the whole picture. Trying to connect the dots along the way is trying to create the future by looking at the past. The way I felt that day at the bank was familiar. It fit into a collection of stories filed away in my brain, reminders of my mistakes and their consequences with a strong desire to avoid committing them again. My experience is universal; it's how the brain works.

Buying into the personal story of my inadequacies and using obstacles as evidence of failure could have provided an excuse to abandon hope and give up my vision. What I've discovered is I will see how the dots connect when I trust my gut, believe in myself, achieve my goal and look back.

I believe persistence in the face of setbacks strengthens hope. Hope keeps my vision alive by letting me trust that every challenge is an opportunity. Hope gives me what I need to take the actions necessary when disempowering thoughts insist something is hopeless.

Over the years, I absorbed two of my competitors and expanded to locations in three states. I sold the business in 2015. It continues to grow and support the medical community in a much bigger network, and I don't need to work again if I don't want to. Hope created the possibility of success.

I trusted the dots would connect, and it made all the difference. Steve Jobs was right.

## **I HOPE THE LAW OF ATTRACTION REALLY WORKS**

In 2006, Rhonda Byrne published "The Secret," a book that suggested, "You can have, be, or do anything you want." I knew people who read it eagerly, giddy at the idea that manifestation could be so easy as putting a request out into the universe and waiting for it to happen. One friend appeared to think she could create an intention and then tuck comfortably into her favorite chair and wait for "The Delivery." It wasn't long before she decided that the message of the book was a lie, at least for her.

Hope has a heavy lift keeping possibility alive. It has to stand against the powerful thoughts that fight against it along the way. I see two big things that have a real chance to kill it.

One is attachment to the goal, believing the path and the end have to look a certain way. Every deviation, every unexpected variation, is a sign that we're on the wrong path. Thoughts appear. "*Uh oh, I can't make payroll.*" In my mind, this means, "*I'm a failure and incompetent.*" That makes me mad. "*It isn't fair.*" I believe the thoughts and now I think it's a sign. "*The universe is telling me to quit.*" My brain takes all that in and responds by sending signals to my body. Emotions arise, connecting from my mind to my heart in an instant, pouring in doubt and overpowering hope, assaulting possibility.

Attachment results in stress, anxiety and fear. You can't know the obstacles you'll encounter along the way, and if you believe the voice in your head that tells you that each one is evidence of imminent failure, you're doomed. The voice (or a thought) captures the heart and pumps in fear, the hope-killer. Attachment subverts trust. Attachment invokes emotion. Emotion allows fear to flood the heart and wash away dreams before you know what hit you.<sup>4</sup>

Think about what happens when you worry. Your attention is on the worry. You visualize what might happen and how it might turn out. It's negative visualization. *It's bad! It's hopeless!* Your brain takes it in as what's so. Your brain cannot distinguish

between reality and the stories you believe.

When I told myself the story that I was going to fail, it was as real to my brain as knowing that I'm breathing. The brain reacted, creating stress and anxiety in my body. Consider the fight-or-flight response, "a physiological reaction that occurs when we are in the presence of something that is mentally or physically terrifying."<sup>5</sup>

My thought that 40 cents in interest evidenced my success registered as reality, too, as real to my brain as knowing that I'm sitting here. My brain reacted, giving me physical feelings of joy. Our brains take it all in, the stories and the reality, as the "truth." The brain accepts it all as what's so.

Letting go of the attachment, however, allows hope (and you) to stay present. An obstacle is just an obstacle, not a circumstance that has arrived to signal failure and stop you in your tracks. The obstacle may even show up as an opportunity, a problem to be solved, leading to alternative actions and new approaches that will take you over, around and through the obstacle.

Hope overcomes negativity and reminds you that you have skills to succeed. This is a powerful confidence booster, providing evidence that bolsters hope, keeps the possibility alive and supports you to keep going.

Actions that arise from negative visualization void of hope may derail long-term success. The longer that negative thoughts persist, the more likely they will cause stress and make your outcome more difficult to sustain. In short, you think you can't sustain it.

Building my business would have been much easier had I not been such a skillful worrier. Had I not allowed hope to conquer my fear, I would have talked myself right into giving up.

A second powerful hope-killer is forgetting who you are. Achieving a goal without suffering requires remembering the powerful spirit you are and believing it to your core. Being gives power to doing and results in having.

Remember "Be. Do. Have," a key idea discussed in The Landmark Forum.

At the core of every dream, every possibility, is the desire for the experience of the outcome, riding on the hope that it can actually happen. Asked enough times, "*and what will you have as the result of that,*" will, at some point, reveal the hidden desire – something like love or joy or happiness or peace.

People tend to think they have to **have** that thing they want in order to finally **be** happy. They decide to **do** certain things, take actions, that will get them that thing they want – a new car, a bigger house and more education – hoping to finally be happy. *I need another degree.* What will you have then? *Then I will be successful.* What will you have then? *Then I will have more friends.* What will you have then? *Then I will be happy.*

What if we started with being happy? Being joy, love and peace. Being in the hopefulness of a better life, a better world even. Do you know people like that, people who are just grateful to be, consistently hopeful? The law of attraction works for them because they start with who they're being.

Being the possibility of love, joy, happiness and peace attracts more love, joy, happiness and peace. People who start with being have access to powerful actions for fulfilling their dreams and giving voice to vision. Obstacles are opportunities for them. These are people who have hope and live in the world of what's possible.

So, you may be wondering how to access hope in the face of obstacles and challenges, people who don't do what you need them to do and circumstances that won't line up as fast as you want them to line up. How do you access *being* before *having*?

In the end, hope lives in pure faith, trust that life works. You find it while reflecting on past success, in prayer or meditation and in humor. A good social circle helps too, people who will hold your desires and commitments when you're in motion and when you need a rest or a kick in the rear. Even people who discourage you, the friend who tells you to "just sell the damn business," can restore hope if you convert their judgments into fuel.

Look for hope in unexpected places. It appears

for me in acts of kindness and also shows up in beauty and truth. Acknowledge it. Cultivate optimism. Practice gratitude. Turn your attention to the possibilities you desire rather than the limitations and boundaries that are usually so much clearer and accessible, at least in your mind.

Make a difference for others. Make a difference for yourself. **Share**. Despair is the opposite of hope. Sharing is the despair killer.

Hope teams with faith and allows us to believe in what seems impossible. Let it pull you off the couch and into action.

### **I HOPE SOMEDAY I CAN LOOK BACK ON THIS AND LAUGH**

Building a business is not for the faint of heart, and, by that I mean, not for people without a large enough capacity for hope, faith and belief in the face of copious thoughts of potential failure. Expect lots of evidence that you should quit. I believe this is true for any big dream you hold. Every commitment you have that shines like a beacon is circled by a halo of glorious achievement – in your mind. Shine on! Keep it lit with hope for the possibility of it.

By the way, my uterus came through and I delivered two amazing sons to the world, borne from, and into, hope and possibilities. How could I not believe in myself, seeing the miracle of my children? They gave me more reason to stand in my belief that I could help cause a better world. They were reason enough to continue the business and make it work. Today, my sons are young men, excelling at life even when it's bumpy, and I'm cheering them on to create and realize their own hopes and dreams, to allow their visions to speak.

In the 22nd year of running my business, I was satisfied and ready to complete this part of my life. It took some time to figure out how I wanted to do that. It was my baby, a living breathing entity, all grown up now. It had sustained me through all kinds of experiences, provided a good life for me and my boys. Saying goodbye had to be right, and so I dialed in to the hope that the right answer would come. Again, I believed and that drove me to begin sharing my plans for completion.

I contacted a business broker and told people close to me. Then a miracle happened.

I scheduled a lunch meeting with the business broker. He asked me questions and gave me a lot of good information. I left with a promise to consider his proposal to sell my business. I got in the car and glanced at my phone. A voicemail waited for me. The vice president of sales from my software vendor, a company that had supported me through my growth, had called to say they were expanding into a new area of work. My business was a perfect match for them. Was I ready to sell?

Yes, I was ready. I hoped it would be easy, but when the negotiations turned challenging, I confess that I got attached, scared and let go of hope more than once. I'm sure I cried. I let go of hope and picked it up again and I let it go and I picked it up. I remember thinking that I couldn't pick it up one more time. Then I picked it up.

I negotiated during a trip to Boston. I got on calls throughout a vacation in Hawaii that took place in the space of a six-hour time difference. It was bruising at times and I did not give up. Finally, it was done. Signing the papers was a satisfying and glorious achievement. My brain put the memory away for future reference, validation of my abilities and a foundation for the voice of some future vision.

My business continues to live today under new ownership. I feel as though I guided another child through the beginning of its life, and now it has graduated to a new phase. I said goodbye with the satisfaction of having delivered a healthy, successful and productive being, able to go forward and be and grow without me.

My sons are adults now. My husband and I have a lovely home in Pennsylvania and we get to winter in the Florida Keys, an accomplishment that is another story for another time, a story that also came from hope and belief in a possibility we created together. For now, I end this with the satisfaction and knowledge that a life of hope that supports possibility is the access to a life lived fully, allowing any dream and any vision to speak.

**I hope you liked my story.**

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# CONVERSATIONS WITH MY 85-YEAR-OLD SELF: ALLOWING VISION TO SPEAK?

ROSE GRANT

## *Abstract*

*After formulating a promise for a bright world, with vibrant ecosystems everywhere, and atmospheric carbon dioxide reduced to pre-1990 levels by 2050, I heard a new voice calling me to account. The voice was a little breathless, but calm as it urged me on. It was the voice of my 85-year-old self. A voice from the future, where vision can speak.*

## **A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH MY 85-YEAR-OLD SELF**

Who is she? It turns out she's still walking up and down hills, making stuff up and getting things wrong, despite knowing too much. She's as preoccupied as ever with commitments and promises, considers herself an accidental activist and plays music with friends, although the gig's almost up. She still hasn't gotten over her first Landmark Forum—three days of training three decades ago that altered everything.<sup>1</sup> It tipped the planet and reshaped every experience, looking forward and back. She doesn't need to explain this transformation in what's possible to me because I did that Forum, too.

That Landmark event reset my course in life. I gave up breaking the rules and trying not to get caught. I started listening, speaking and taking action to create a bright and vivid world. I brought the possibility of love, fun and powerful leadership to a planet imperiled by pollution and started playing a giant game to reduce atmospheric carbon

dioxide below 1990 levels by 2050. That's when my 85-year-old self showed up.

She came bustling into my originating circle when I reviewed Landmark's Wisdom Unlimited course in 2018.<sup>2</sup> In the middle of the action, there she was — tireless, defiant, urging real conviction and with a message to keep getting involved, to stay committed, to lead and to never give up." "You're the present and the future," she said to me. "Who else but you to work for this beautiful blue planet?" It was pretty intrusive because she wants me to win. She wants it to go well. She wants things set up now for a cool world in 2047.

I haven't always listened to my 85-year-old self. At first, I ignored her because she wasn't invited. Then I remembered my manners. I introduced myself and got curious about why she'd come now. "You need me," she insisted, which I seriously doubted at that time. Things had been going swimmingly with no intercession from an ancient future me as long as I ignored yawning chasms of inequality, desperate lives,

catastrophic climate change, local extinctions and shattered biodiversity. So, that's how it started—a moving dialogue with a funny, urgent and self-interested voice from the future; a voice that was recognizably me.

This paper is a reflection on the origins, opportunities and merits of engaging with such a vision and voice. A personified future can powerfully shape being and acting in the present. It's an investigation into how we create ourselves and others ongoingly from childhood. It considers fiction and the phenomenon of invisible childhood friends in developing this capacity. It explores the usefulness of characters in creating new futures and touches on the curious faculty of vision. It is also a story about being accountable to oneself and others in fulfilling a promise for the future.

### INVISIBLE FRIENDS

It seems to have taken me an inordinately long time to grow up and function as an adult. I scarcely recognize some of my earlier incarnations when I return to old diaries and notes. Some memories feel like visiting a foreign land without a guidebook or translator. It has me question who I have been in the past and where my invisible playmates have gone. It has me wonder if I will recognize myself in another decade or two.

When I was five, I had three invisible friends who played with me and my brothers. We seemed inseparable the long summer before I started school, filling our old house with chatter. Our imaginary companions slept among our toys, spilt milk at breakfast and insisted on actual sandwiches for lunch. Ingeniously, our mum found a linen tea towel decorated with a colorful assortment of food for our invisible friends to graze from, while my brothers and I ate and shared our intense and vivid young lives.

After school started, these friends seemed bored with the new order and slowly drifted away. They were replaced by other characters but not until they had filled a gap in my originating circle, and we had explored many curious and commonplace things. They were braver, brighter and faster than I was, so good for investigating and having adventures.

The phenomenon whereby kids create imaginary

people as a locus for play is more common than not, according to formal studies.<sup>3,4,5</sup> As companions and confidantes, invisible friends extend children's emotional and cognitive range, indicate good social skills and typify a healthy, creative intelligence.<sup>6</sup>

**TABLE 1**

Top five purposes of an imaginary friend:

1. Problem-solving and emotion management
2. Exploring ideas and language
3. Having a companion for fantasy play
4. Having someone to overcome loneliness
5. Exploring behaviors and roles in relationships.

Not all imaginary playmates are friendly though. Some bite, steal, tell lies and engage in other bad behavior. Marjorie Taylor, a psychology professor at the University of Oregon, says they can be greedy or arrogant or clingy or bossy.<sup>7</sup> Nothing, it seems, is off limits. However, they are not associated with delusional disorders. Rather, through play and impersonation, invisible companions allow young people to explore new realms and often experience physical and emotional comfort. Given the obvious benefits, why would anyone ever part from these invisible beings?

In "Two Lands in My Mind," Sophie Elmhirst speculates on where imaginary friends go when their human creators grow up.<sup>8</sup> Elmhirst was a participant in a United Kingdom study of 593 adults who reported having invisible friends. She notes only a fifth of those surveyed with her had invisible companions surviving past the age of 10. As she puts it:

"So what happens to the imaginary friends? They are abandoned, frozen in time, consigned to memory and anecdote. But our imagination doesn't die with them ... One part of us marches forth into the world and plays along, working and striving and performing as a sane and dutiful

citizen, sibling, parent and friend. And then there's the more lawless part, the second land that unfurls behind the scenes, gives space to wilder dreams or to thoughts less explicable by language, unhooked from reality. We do not, just because we grow up, lose our capacity for fantasy or imagination; it simply comes out in other ways."<sup>9</sup>

One way this capacity for imaginative invention may develop is through personified future selves such as my 85-year-old incarnation. Another is through the creation of literature and art, including theater, speculative fiction and hyper-real art.

### FICTIONAL COMPANIONS

The strongest adult parallel to imaginary friends is probably found in the world of fiction. It's humanity's laboratory for seeing the world through a character's eyes. It's a well of knowledge and information we can tap. It's a simulation where we may inhabit or become another person, creature or being. Speculative fiction is a super-genre embracing all stories that take place beyond our known world.

Canadian author Margaret Atwood describes speculative fiction as "literature that deals with possibilities in a society which have not yet been enacted but are latent."<sup>10</sup> Speculative literature, therefore, alters the laws of what's real, possible or known in our current situation, and then speculates on the likely outcome.

#### TABLE 2

As I see it, the top five purposes for speculative fiction are:

1. Problem-solving and emotion management
2. Exploring ideas and language
3. Enveloping empathy and social skills
4. Providing companionship and pleasure
5. Improving relationships by exploring behaviors and roles in relationship.

In an article, "Writers and Imaginary Friends," Ron Samul, a writer and educator based in England, suggests the creatures of our childhood imaginations are the precursors to vivid characters of fiction. And he asserts that recalling imaginary friends is a way to reengage with being creative.<sup>11</sup>

"This creative and imaginary world can be refined into something like art," Samul writes. "And that is a kind of superpower for writers.... Maybe you lost some of the raw magical spirit of your imagination, but you didn't lose the instinct to be creative and refine the empathy and emotions in the characters you've created."<sup>12</sup>

He says writers use the skills of "wild and unabashed imagination" to continue to create a world they find unique and compelling. Further, Samul asserts there can be a straightforward transition from invisible friend to character in a work of fiction. Marjorie Taylor, who studies the development of imagination and creativity, agrees and also finds direct parallels between adult and childhood imaginary characters in her research on play and development. She contends that:

"Human beings have a unique capacity to love, share our lives, and even bare our souls to imaginary others. Imaginary others can take many forms, including imaginary versions of real people, fictional characters from books, and invented people or animals custom designed to meet the particular needs of their creator."<sup>13</sup>

Taylor notes that adult fiction writers often develop personal relationships with their characters who seem to have independent thought, words, desires and actions—in other words, minds and wills of their own.

### VISIONARY CHARACTERS

The idea of fictional characters at large has an ancient lineage. Influential United States academic Joseph Campbell's "monomyth" points to a common structure underneath all mythic stories<sup>14</sup> Campbell's concepts of the hero's journey and the monomyth contend that mythic characters come preformed in every tradition and era, ready to model personal, spiritual and psychological growth. Everyone, according to Campbell, is born into an eternal story and compelled to adventure in their own unique way, but never alone.

As Campbell put it, "We have not ever to risk the adventure alone, for the heroes of all time have gone before us. The labyrinth is thoroughly known...we have only to follow the thread of the hero path."<sup>15</sup>

Ordeals faced in the course of the journey expand a character's consciousness and transform or elevate them to heroic or divine status. In other words, mythic characters share many features with visionaries. YourDictionary states:

"A visionary is someone or something that thinks about the future or advancements in a creative and imaginative way. A person who is ahead of his time and who has a powerful plan for change in the future is an example of a visionary."<sup>16</sup>

Of course, all fictitious characters do not have the attributes of the visionary or sage. Speculative fiction writer Michael J. Martinez says lead characters don't need to conform to the heroic archetype.<sup>17</sup> He cautions against fabricating characters with "world-shaking powers/magic/technology and quests that will make the foundations of the world(s) tremble." Characters, Martinez says, "are simply...people. Normal people, in fact," who grow as individuals in the course of events.

The capacity for fictional characters to illuminate and amplify human development can be traced to Shakespeare's series of 37 plays written between 1589 and 1613. American literary critic Harold Bloom suggests in the opening chapter of his book, "Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human," that prior to Shakespeare, characters in plays would unfold, but not necessarily develop. Shakespeare created the expectation of development, Bloom argues, through a vast panoply of characters with "the capacity for self-enquiry that might reveal something unexpected, not only to us, but also to themselves."<sup>18</sup> Development, according to Bloom, is conveyed through characters' actions and speech and is revealed when conflicting parts of characters show we are not simply who we say we are.

### ALLOWING VISION TO SPEAK

As an adolescent encountering Shakespeare's texts for the first time in school, I was riven by

internal conflicts. Disagreements between my family's values and standards at school added to my misery. I strutted and fretted but missed the resemblance to Shakespeare's tragic or comic characters. Yet, I took refuge in stories, hoping for happy endings, or at least to escape from the daily insults and difficulties. Layers of inauthenticity were piling up and casting dark shadows around me.

Radio was my refuge and books became a bridge to the adult world. Time passed and somewhat miraculously, soda became vodka, my bike became a car and I was driving backwards into the future "looking at the present through a rear-view mirror" dragging the past along.<sup>19</sup> By the time I was a young adult, I'd made myself wretched and abject by disowning large parts of myself and abandoning magic and dreams.

Landmark's programs provided a remedy, stripping away layers of story and harsh conclusions. The Forum gave me direct access to the eternal and opened up pathways to communicate and recreate myself and others. But I was still stunned to discover the power of listening when I heard that voice of my 85-year-old self. Like a scientific instrument designed to detect signals from ancient stars, it seemed I might be able to tune out the static enough to be receptive to the beat of my ancient heart.

In the Harvard Business Review, Declan Fitzsimons, an adjunct professor, says characters develop because they have the ability to overhear themselves talking (either to themselves or others) and are able to reconceive themselves. "Listening in, characters can witness internal experience, and give rise to new ways of being," Fitzsimons writes.<sup>20</sup>

He says this occurs by giving something up "including some of our most cherished notions of the person we think we are, in order to discover the person we could become." Fundamentally, it is a capacity to listen for new ways of being and transform.

### AN ACCOUNTABLE VOICE

Is it possible to be fully accountable to an invented *persona*? While much can be said for a rigorous relationship based on being one's word, there is a risk of self-deception. Being open to scrutiny and

oversight is the essence of accountability. The old adage holds that “sunlight is the best disinfectant,” and sunshine comes from hot, bright and distant stars. Likewise, exposure to scrutiny from illuminating external sources is powerful and may even be essential to fulfilling a commitment for the world. I’d caution anyone tempted to replace governance, accountability and oversight with an imaginary older self. However, the insight offered by an invisible friend might complement external oversight and accountability.

Insight implies a deep, internal, intuitive or spiritual knowledge or understanding. In addition to insight, imagined older selves or friends may also offer valuable perspective and hindsight. The ability to look both ways through time may be salient for humanity. One of the most influential novels of the 20th century certainly suggests this.

English author T.H. White’s “The Once and Future King” is a masterly retelling of the Arthurian legend.<sup>21</sup> In it, White binds the present and future together through the characters of Arthur and his teacher, Merlin. Young Arthur is guileless and subject to Merlin’s powers of magic and prophecy.

“My boy,” Merlin said, “you shall be everything in the world, animal, vegetable, mineral, *protista* or virus, for all I care—before I have done with you—but you will have to trust to my superior backsight.”<sup>22</sup>

Merlin’s backsight is conferred by White’s invention of the idea of his being born backwards in time. As Merlin says, “I have to live backwards from in front, while surrounded by a lot of people living forwards from behind. Some people call it having a second sight.” This contrary relationship to time means Merlin knows the future and all that will happen, but the past is hermetically sealed. It’s become a powerful metaphor to explore desired futures, strategic thinking and leadership ideas.

Hindsight and foresight can benefit both individuals and organizations with promises, projects or undertakings. The consulting firm, Arup, emphasizes “that analysis has to combine hindsight about the past, insight about the present and foresight about the future.”<sup>23</sup> Cognitive psychologist Gary Klein writes in the Harvard Business Review about the use of prospective hindsight to devise a method called

a pre-mortem, which helps project teams identify risks at the outset.<sup>24</sup> Many other applications exist.

## GIFTS OF PERSPECTIVE

The words from my 85-year-old’s lips sound pragmatic rather than prophetic. She doesn’t predict or peddle certainties to me. (She must know I would reject these like a religion.) The gift I do accept from her is what we call perspective. I appreciate her longer time horizon. It helps me discern what matters from all the noise.

In a 2011 TED talk called “The Battle Between Your Present and Future Self,” Daniel Goldstein, a behavioral economist, highlights the tendency to prefer quick payoffs over long-term gains.<sup>25</sup> He says usually we value the present more than the future, but the outcomes are often misaligned. In human evolution, it generally made sense to place a high value on instant gratification. No longer, according to economist James Woodburn, who shows society has recently shifted to a predominantly delayed-return environment.<sup>26</sup>

Knotty problems, such as atmospheric pollution and climate change, are typical of this. They continually lose out to the crisis of the day until the point when (too late) they themselves surface as the crisis *du jour*. Changing the timeframe from minutes and days to years, decades or longer reconfigures what we see.

Stretch the time horizon and features in the present shrink. Bigger themes and movements emerge beyond the quotidian detail. Different temporal perspectives also alter how we can see responsibility and being at cause in the world. Chronological time, that blunt yardstick of minutes, months and decades, warps what we imagine we can accomplish.

Typically, people overestimate what they think they can do in a day and completely underrate what can be fulfilled in a decade. Blogger Tim Parish attributes this strong tendency to “our struggle to conceptualize exponential growth.”<sup>27</sup> Humanity’s bias toward shorter time horizons also has us over-promise and under-deliver with an inevitable loss of power. Parish says it fuels hype and makes progress tricky to predict or even notice as it happens.

So how about a nudge from the far horizon by an imaginary 85-year-old self? Could your own imaginary voice restore power and amplify effectiveness? Could you creatively reset the clock for your commitment for the world? What could you accomplish if you gave your vision more space to speak?

## LISTENING TO THE FUTURE

The nudge from my notional 85-year-old self sounds like direct, plain speaking to me. The visionary voice simply says, “back to work!” or “time to get moving” or “no excuses.” If I pause and listen longer, she might, from time to time, offer a tactic or strategy. For example:

- Improve the whole by mastering one thing
- Never cut what you can untie
- Remember, whatever is happening is like clay – a resource to play with
- Organize today by thinking about the decade, etc.

Socratic questions also come when I listen from the fulfillment of my global vision. Eighty-five-year-old me might probe and ask, for example:

- What is a small pleasure that brings you enormous joy? Can you enjoy it today?
- Do you need to work at a different level and zoom in or out on this thing?
- Could your current choices get you to your desired future? If not, now what?
- What could you give up, so you can try a different way?

When I listen from the future I’ve promised to fulfill, I don’t need to know anything more. I don’t need fancy tools, tricks or props. I actually don’t need inspiration. I just need to get on with it. Author Marilynne Robinson expressed it well, when talking to the Paris Review. She said:

“To change my own mind, I try to create a new vocabulary or terrain for myself, so that I open out — I always think of the Dutch claiming land from the sea — or open up something that would have been closed to me before. That’s the point and the

pleasure of it. I continuously scrutinize my own thinking. I write something and think, ‘How do I know that that’s true?’ If I wrote what I thought I knew from the outset, then I wouldn’t be learning anything new.”<sup>28</sup>

I may not make it to 2047. I may never meet and embody my 85-year-old self; never mind. But listening and allowing the future to open out now makes all the difference. Some 2050 “promises” to reverse climate change might be hollow postures and can be disheartening.<sup>29</sup> Promises are gold when they belong to the future, when they raise courage and ambition, and when they allow vision to speak.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The Landmark Forum is the flagship course offered by Landmark and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs.
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# TEN DAYS OF SILENCE

ANNA S. CHOI

## **ABSTRACT**

*My vision is to catalyze the next generation of leaders to cause a tipping point in elevating humanity's consciousness. In 2021, I embarked on a 10-day silent Vipassana meditation retreat to experience inner peace.*

Attending a Vipassana meditation retreat is not easy.<sup>1</sup> Each day, participants rise at 4:30 a.m. and spend 12 hours a day meditating in total stillness. On breaks, participants agree not to write, read, dance, exercise, make eye contact, gesture with others or bring in any other spiritual practice.

I waited exactly 20 years to attend a Vipassana meditation retreat after a friend raved about it. The pandemic was a year in, and I had won a lottery seat to attend. In listening to the silence, what would my soul say was the best way to allow my vision to speak?

## **WHY I WENT TO THE RETREAT**

No matter how much I accomplished professionally or personally in my life, I still felt empty. I'd feel a temporary "high" from the accomplishment and then I would return to experiencing life as mundane. I'd create another

vision board, accomplish it and then would always be left wondering to myself, "Is this it?"

This was maddening.

*I should stay happy given how good my life was. How dare I feel ungrateful? Why couldn't I experience the joy of being alive? Why was I so bored?*

By eliminating every possible distraction, I wanted to feel the elixir of being alive each moment, rather than take for granted the preciousness of life on planet earth. I craved for the answer to what was the highest manifestation of my vision in this lifetime?

## **BASICS OF ATTENDING A VIPASSANA MEDITATION RETREAT**

The retreat is free, including room and board. There's an opportunity to give a donation at the end only if you received value.

First, you agree to a code of discipline for the duration of the meditation experience before applying that includes no killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct or substance use.

At the start, you turn in your smartphone so you can remain 100% offline with no devices or anything to distract you.

From 4 a.m. to 9 p.m. you meditate in two-, three- or four-hour chunks at a time, with 1.5-2 hour breaks in between for eating meals and resting your body.

All meals are vegetarian served at 6:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. sharp for a precise window of 30-45 minutes. Dinner at 5 p.m. is a piece of fruit with tea.

Participants can ask the teacher questions each day at noon or 9 p.m. Every evening at 7 p.m., participants also listen to a recorded discourse from Vipassana's original teacher, S.N. Goenka, on how to master the meditation technique.

On breaks between meditations, it's recommended to remain in silence without interacting with others, including gesturing or making eye contact. Writing, reading, journaling, practicing yoga, jogging or engaging in other spiritual practices are not allowed for the duration of the course.

This design allows participants to establish the Vipassana practice in its purity and give this approach to meditation a fair trial.

Here's what happened each day:

#### **DAY 1: SURVIVAL**

My body hurts from sitting and meditating. While there are a generous number of stools, cushions and blocks available to help us feel at ease with long hours of sitting in meditation, sitting that long still feels painful.

Yet, I am beginning to detox my mind – its addictions, habits and negative feedback loops. I'm already able to delight in the present moment much more than before. The hot showers feel like bliss.

On the first day, I was nervous whether I could handle eating just two meals a day. On the first day, I was still in "maximizing my time" mode figuring out all the resources, analyzing the schedule and then planning out what had to get done by when.

However, I misread the schedule. After my shower, I thought that I had time despite an inkling inside of me saying there was only 45 minutes to breakfast and to arrive before 7:15 a.m. I ignored the inkling, entered at 7:20 a.m. only to find being five minutes late cost me one of two meals for the day.

That first lesson was like a slap in the face. I heard my inner thoughts screaming, "Are you kidding?"

*I've got just two meals a day and I just missed the first meal? Eating is one of the only things I'm allowed to do and now I have to sit by myself? Where's the manager – let me see if they can make an exception ..."*

In the next 30 seconds, I saw how reactive my mind, my ego, was being. I saw how entitled my thinking is to expect to get what I want when I want. I saw how I'm always late even when there's nothing else to do. How I ignore and override my intuition. How I can be demanding. How all my planning didn't matter.

That was worth the price of admission right there – as if there was even a price since the retreat is 100% donation-based.

Instead of demanding what I wanted, I had my first new behavior. I did nothing. I didn't make any request for an exception. I just flowed with it telling my stomach all will be well.

However, once lunch rolled around, I then overindulged to "stock up" my stomach knowing dinner would be fruit and tea. I became full and kept eating. I started hesitating before bites, asking myself, am I over full? I couldn't tell and kept eating. Until *that* bite when I knew it was too much. My tummy would *not* be happy. But the scarcity thoughts inside overcame my actions and I kept eating just a few more bites.

I then paid for it in my next three-hour meditation session. When all is in silence, you have a real opportunity to see your blind spots in full living color. There I was, and my stomach made as loud, gurgling sounds and noises as one can imagine in a room full of silently meditating people.

Did my stomach always work this hard? I wouldn't know because in day-to-day life, I'm not paying attention. Another man behind me was also loudly burping every 5-20 minutes. I tried to remain focused on my own meditation. Everyone was fidgeting trying to find their best seating posture.

Later that night during the one-hour teacher's discourse, he said, "It's fine to fidget for the first 2-3 days ..."

I thought: *First 2-3 days? What was happening on day 4?*

When the teacher joked how it's as if we were in prison, my body relaxed. OK, I wasn't the only one thinking this. However, what became clear is that it wasn't the prison of my environment, but the prison of my mind that was most soul-sucking.

## DAY 2: MIND TO MATTER

By Day 2, I had the rhythm down, knew where to go and did my best not to overeat at breakfast and lunch. Despite missing a meal, I actually felt fine in the morning. In spite of this learning, I still overate, just in case this two-meal-a-day thing was going to catch up to me and I'd be starving while meditating.

My ego's pattern of survival was to stock up for later though I had felt no hunger the day before when I ate only one meal. I was alive and well.

During meditation, my mind would worry over the past or future, plan out business actions, remember lessons to write down after the 10 days, think about family and friend interactions and be anxious whether I'd survive the retreat. Anywhere but here.

Our teacher wanted participants to simply focus on the sensation of our breath going through our nostrils. Noticing whether there was more sensation on my left or right nostril and not judging whatever sensation I felt.

So simple, yet my mind would freak. *Oh no! One nostril is clogged ... does that mean I have allergies ... what's that blockage from? What do I need to change in my habits to fix it?* Eventually, I noticed that I was lost in thought and returned to feeling the sensation, asking myself "Is it hot? Cold? Tickly? Tingly?"

At best, I could feel the body sensations of being equanimous without judgment or reaction for one minute during an hour of meditation.

Our teacher said to try to go from one minute up to five minutes. If we are doing at least one minute, then we are on track. I felt relieved.

How much of most human beings' minds operate anywhere but here?

When rid of very possible distraction, there is no one to face but myself. When my *same* thoughts, emotions, habits and patterns arise

in an environment stripped of every distraction possible, my excuses, blame and defenses hold no weight and I must face, allow and be with my mind the way it is and isn't.

## DAY 3: TEMPTATION TO QUIT

Our teacher says Day 3 and 6 are the days that people are most likely to quit and leave.

I could not stop dozing off. I quickly learned if I slouched my spine, my head would inevitably nod off every few minutes as I'd wake up suddenly and shake my head, only to slowly be lulled back into sleepy land with my lids slowly drooping.

When I don't sit my spine upright like a lightning rod, I cannot conduct energy through my spine. There's no power to remain calm yet alert observing all the body sensations.

The teacher said, if we were dozing, to try breathing heavily to wake oneself up. If that doesn't work, stand up. If that doesn't work, walk around, and then come back and sit. But no napping, he warned.

I was caught. Just the day before I had reasoned with myself it was OK to nap during meditation. I reasoned that it was better to take a power nap and wake up refreshed than the torture of dozing off nonstop over the hour without actually meditating. Sleeping could be meditating, right?

I started standing when I meditated. It worked. From that day forward, I broke my cycle of dozing and rarely nodded off again after Day 3.

I was also beginning to notice how every pain and body sensation, no matter how seemingly stuck it was, eventually shifted. In other words, every sensation was impermanent.

Here I was – at the height of pollen season during a pandemic – and my nose would start to tickle, itch and then slowly drip—all while wearing a mask. It was excruciating to just let my nose drip with a mask on, but I did.

Eventually (with a few tissue wads stuck up my nostrils), I was able to trust that no matter how gross a body sensation was happening, it too shall pass.

#### **DAY 4: VIPASSANA**

Up until Day 4, the first three days of a kind of breathing known as Anapana breathing through the nostrils was all preparation to sharpen our minds and prepare for the actual Vipassana technique.

We are advised not to get attached to the pleasant sensations or have aversions toward unpleasant gross sensations. Instead, remain equanimous – calm and even-minded no matter what sensations arise, pleasant or unpleasant.

Around me, some meditators burped loudly through the group sit every five minutes from what I could hear was a gurgling full belly. Following our agreement not to make eye contact with anyone, I have no idea who was burping.

The noise consumed my meditation. *Why can't this person stop overeating or at least quietly burp instead of getting so much joy from it? Do they realize we can all hear him?*

It got to the point where I had to tell the course manager. We were allowed to communicate with a pen and scratch paper regarding any health, facility concern, etc. I scribbled out my complaint about the burping person.

When I actually wrote it out and saw what I wrote, I saw how whiny, petty and judgmental I was being and was shocked to see it written. The moment I read it, I tore the note up and threw it away.

From that moment on, I never was bothered by the nonstop burping in future sessions.

I thought, perhaps, world peace is possible, if we simply can be at peace with ourselves in our surroundings as they are.

#### **DAY 5: HOMESICK**

I'm now acclimated to sitting for 10 hours a day and have found my two favorite sitting positions. I realize that breaks between meditation sits are designed to allow my mind to wander freely as well as for my body to rest rather than necessarily to do something.

Given it's my one time to talk, I love signing up almost every day for the teacher Q&A session.

I am going nuts not being able to capture and

journal my awakenings and learning and consider at one point smuggling the scratch paper and using the pen for writing notes to the course manager to write down daily awakenings. I exercise my self-control (daily) and stay pure to the discipline of no writing.

Each day, one more technique is layered on from the day before. I am getting much better—sometimes even staying focused the whole hour. I enjoy my newfound ability to create subtle energy showers within my body from my head to toes when we scan our body and allow ourselves to simply feel whatever body sensations exist or not from top-to-bottom.

#### **DAY 6: THE TIPPING POINT**

We've been warned that this is the day that's easiest to turn back and quit. I miss interaction with humans such as making eye contact or opening doors for them. However, I do find that silence is bliss. I also appreciate the austere lifestyle. I notice that I'm still judging others. My mind focuses on petty things when it's got nothing else to worry about.

During a meditation, I have a bout of homesickness and sadness not seeing my son and husband, Leo and Eli. I cry, but as I've been doing the last six days, I allow the body sensation of feeling to come in like a wave, flow through, and then notice it's gone.

Now that we are six days in, I start to face life after the retreat. I question everything – including my deeply held sacred beliefs. I notice my reactions.

#### **DAY 7: MY SOUL'S PURPOSE**

I came for two things. To understand why I couldn't be happy despite having everything and discover my soul's fullest expression in this lifetime.

Now, it's as though my soul's purpose downloaded like a 3D movie. For an hour straight, it poured in and I just absorbed.

Before attending the retreat, I had gone to energy healers, psychics, gurus and shamans to get access. So, I was pleased that I had developed my awareness acutely enough to receive directly from Source. My path for now was to focus on helping others master their

energy to lead a life energetically aligned with their soul by using a social enterprise model for greater impact and accessibility, rather than my current boutique business coaching programs that generate high profit margins impacting a small handful of people.

When ready, the next path would appear and my job was simply to follow the flow and surrender to where it takes me.

During the next meditation session, I became acutely aware of my entire body's energy, feeling sensations everywhere – my limbs, fingertips, organs and the top of my head. I could feel every subtle and gross sensation at once.

It was the most intense, blissful energy massage. My physical body disappeared into an energy vortex where I ceased to exist and felt stabs of joyful euphoric energetic penetrations that sent buzzing and tickling throughout my body. These feelings went on for a good 30 minutes of the hour, maybe more, who knows – time disappeared.

In the end, I told myself, "This too shall pass." I was completely unattached, not expecting to ever again have that euphoric experience.

Simply enjoying 100% being present to that moment, yet detached from clinging to the same experience happening or not happening the following day, I discovered how to enjoy life as it flows, free of attachment. This was liberation.

#### **DAY 8: IMPERMANENCE**

The next day, I doubted my euphoric experience complete with singing angels and a cosmic download. But this time, rather than listen to the doubt, I had anticipated it. This too shall pass.

We had been warned since Day 2 that the most dangerous line to walk is when you first experience the pleasant subtle sensations and get attached, or feel your body disappear and feel euphoric. The moment you want that hit again is the moment you're now stuck in the other side of the ego trap, a spectrum in attraction, craving and clinging that leads to misery if there's any craving or attachment.

So, I enjoyed my euphoria from the night before,

and at the end of the night told myself—this too shall pass.

During meditation, I discovered impermanence. I felt doubt come, and felt it pass rather than cling to it. I was so happy. The doubt had no hold on me. It was just a feeling that meant nothing and would pass.

I suddenly saw the world in a whole new light. I had been blinded by wallowing in my cravings.

I looked at a tree and noticed how each leaf comes and goes. The roots, branches and growth of the tree ... it all ebbs and flows. My mind could fast forward 100 years and see the entire landscape disappear or reverse 1,000 years and see how the prairie before me had never existed. I could see every object as bits of energy swirling, coming, going, always shape-shifting and dancing to the moment.

I felt every cell in my body changing, coming, going, shifting and transforming according to whatever I fed it with my mind. In my mind's eye, I could see myself pass away, be born, live and die again, and see all my relationships, coming and going. I could see all my life's work, business ventures, coming and going.

The lie I believed was that I was supposed to stick to the course (in business, partnerships, anything), don't be a flake, don't be scattered or how will clients know what you do if you keep shifting? But we all evolve massively, constantly and immediately.

What a lie I lived! What freedom in knowing *everything* from an ant, to a tree, to my mind, to my expectations, to my relationships, to countries, to pandemic protocols and to my mood for the day or moment to moment ultimately are all impermanent.

Longing, craving and clinging to permanence or enlightenment are the source of suffering. Wanting an answer for how to best manifest my highest soul's expression wasn't an inquiry—it was a demand on life to control my future and pretend that knowing my future would anchor me in the now. Yet wanting an answer was simply a craving that would lead to misery once I became attached to that path.

No longer an intellectual understanding, I felt this truth in my cells. Seeing the world around me with new eyes. I then felt the joy of being alive.

I realized there's nothing in this world that will, or can, make me happy. Happiness is a choice. Yay!

Before the retreat, my worth was tied up with how much I earned. Yet, understanding everything is shifting (including how much you have) had me realize that making more money no longer gripped me by trying to prove myself.

My ambitions shifted from wanting more money, power, influence and recognition (while saying on the outside it was all about impact) to suddenly I had no interest in those things. None.

I realized that being more recognized, more influential is so fleeting, so useless. There no longer was any grip to perform for some arbitrary "should" image in my mind of where my bank account or client's or kid's performance was at.

The root of my misery was constant craving. Holding onto and being attached to enlightenment. Liberation was being present. Allowing what is to be, to flow through and witness it, remaining equanimous whether pleasant or unpleasant.

#### **DAY 9: PAIN AND PLEASURE**

I discovered the pain of pleasure. Up until this day, I had experienced mostly pains in the first few days. I grappled with why would someone want to remain calm and equanimous when feeling pleasure and passion? Seemed like a buzzkill.

But I discovered that constantly suppressing my sensual feelings only made the sensations louder. True liberation lies in feeling the full feeling (whether judged as good or bad) in its entirety, then letting it pass.

Severe pain? This too shall pass.

The subtle, pleasurable energy sensations? This too shall pass.

The gross ecstasy sensations? This too shall pass.

I allowed myself to fully indulge in a sensual feeling. While meditating, what I'd suppressed for years was being truly ecstatic and present in my body. It seemed as though every cell exploded with joy.

Meanwhile, I simply was sitting there meditating, not doing anything.

I discovered how sexuality is distracting when not grounded. For a moment, I felt inspired by the thought of celibacy (despite a 17-year marriage) as a super highway to the divine. If I could experience such sensual ecstasy alone – way better than any sex – why would I bother the complications of bringing in another being with all their energy baggage?

I could make love with the divine anytime and feel a thousand times more ecstasy.

#### **DAY 10: PIERCING THE SILENCE**

The last day we're allowed to talk as we transition back to the noisy, chaotic, speaking world.

I suddenly found it quite shocking to talk. Chatter pierced the sacred silence.

Excited to see my family, I could not imagine returning to the nonstop reactive world in which I live. "If one in 10 times you have a different response after the retreat, that's progress," we're told.

#### **IN SUMMARY**

Experiencing impermanence at the cellular level, I'm now settled in my life's work as ever evolving rather than as one defined strategy or action plan. Instead of constantly trying to figure out and control what I'm supposed to be doing to make the best use of my genius, I've surrendered to constant impermanence.

I can stay in the inquiry of my purpose asking, "What will liberate this leader's soul expression right now?" rather than force an answer to feel as though I have some control of my future.

By trusting my true soul's voice, I can simply declare each day, "Use me up however you see fit!" then surrender and stop figuring anything out. This allows me to finally experience the joy of being alive. I can be present in the moment.

This is just the beginning. Establishing myself in this practice showed me it is possible to rewire unconscious reactions in the human mind by simply being equanimous with any body sensations that arise.

Whether scratching an itch at night, to judging someone silently or snapping at your kid – the root of these reactions dwells as a cellular experience in the body. By focusing your mind’s awareness on the body sensation, then practicing responding equanimously, you can rewire your neural pathways, absolve the root of your ego’s misery and discover a lasting inner peace with the joy of knowing “This too shall pass.”

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Vipassana, which means to see things as *they really are*, is one of India’s most ancient techniques of meditation. It was taught in India more than 2,500 years ago as a universal remedy for universal ills, i.e., an Art of Living. Accessed Jan. 15, 2022, [www.dhamma.org/en-US/index](http://www.dhamma.org/en-US/index).

# DISCOVERING A CLEAR VISION OF WIFE AND MOTHER THROUGH TRAUMA, ADDICTION AND LOVE

PEG MILLER

## ABSTRACT

*“Hurt people hurt people.” Peg Miller learned this from her work with people with disabilities, people who were homeless, addicted, mentally ill and had histories of criminality and abuse. Her own hurt, caused by abuse she suffered as a child, led her to mistreat her own children. But her vision of being a loving and kind mother and spouse led her to heal from trauma, recover from addictions and repair relationships within her own family. Her vision of being a kind, loving and supportive mother and spouse led her to understand how important these roles are for global transformation. “Healed people heal people” can transform a world filled with pain and suffering.*

Since I was very small, I wanted to be a wife and mother. I made this clear to my parents early on, and they responded as loving parents would. My dad built a crib for my baby doll, and my mom made her bedding, clothes and pajamas. I received baby dolls for almost every occasion, and I cherished each of them.

The problem was that my parents were not loving. I had a vision of motherhood and spousal connection that I invented out of the longings of my heart and soul. I imagined hugs and kisses, love songs and tenderness, conversations and understandings.

But my mother had bipolar disorder, undiagnosed and untreated until she was 63. She was mentally unstable. She would slap me as easily as look at me. She screamed at me many, many times a day. When I was a teenager, she attacked me with a butcher knife. My father hadn't wanted children and referred to me as “it” in his letters to my mom during World War II. His way of dealing with my mother's illness was to ignore or withdraw. He was a heavy smoker and drinker who died of lung disease at 65.

I was sexually abused by a cousin when I was quite young and date raped in college.

The trauma of this emotional, physical and psychological abuse filled me with rage and despair. Until I was 36, I was a binge drinker.

I stopped a three-pack-a-day smoking habit at the age of 33 and sexual promiscuity at the age of 34. I managed to always look good to the outside world, but I was verbally abusive, mean and controlling to my children and husband. Eventually, my children also had issues with drugs and alcohol.

Fortunately, deep inside I carried a vision of fulfilling on the passage of “Love” as expressed in the Bible, in First Corinthians 13: “Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.” I retained my longings for love and connection and stayed true to my vision of motherhood and wifedom. I clung to this vision of familial bliss as if my life depended on it.

Which it did.

I am convinced now that all people who grew up traumatized—either by their parents, or by others, or by war, or by other circumstances beyond their control—need a vision of what their true hearts’ desire is, if we are to live in a transformed world. To realize that vision, they need help.

### **INTO THE MORASS**

In pictures of myself as a child, I look frozen. I look terrified. I’m dressed pretty and look like the beautiful little girl my mother wanted to present to the world to prove her goodness. But, in reality, I was a lonely child in a household so cold and filled with anger and fear that frozen was the safest way to survive.

My mother’s mental illness, her resulting physical and emotional abuse and my father’s emotional distance traumatized me as a child. But so did the times themselves. Everything that we now know leads to emotionally and physically healthy children was prohibited in the 1950s.

Although often lauded as the ideal time to have been a child, the 1950s were in some respects a very difficult time to seek nurturance and to feel safe. Spoiling your children was a parent’s biggest fear.

When I started school, I finally found a place

where I could be a little more myself and a little happier. I always did well in school. A born extrovert, I made and kept friends easily. I continued to act out my longings, however. After my half-day kindergarten, I stayed at the home of my best friend because my mother worked outside the home. Often, we would play house. We’d hang blankets on the outdoor clothesline in the shape of a home for each of us. Jan was married to Roy Rogers, and I was married to Gene Autry, both famous cowboys on television. I pretended that I had six children, including twins, a girl and a boy.

I pretended that I knew what it would feel like to be loved.

Then came another kind of trauma: realizing that girls and women were valued far less than boys and men.

I loved playing with boys and girls alike. My dad taught me to fish and hunt and had me help him build a boat, so I wasn’t used to being treated only “like a girl.” In sixth grade, I pitched for the boys’ softball team because I was athletic and the best pitcher. I remember feeling shocked and dismayed when, in ninth grade, I wasn’t allowed to run track with the boys. When I became student body president and my boyfriend Denny was voted vice president, his mother said, “I’m surprised you are president.” This was when I realized people expected much less for girls than boys. This felt like a huge betrayal.

I sensed avenues being closed to me. I always thought I’d be a teacher, but when it occurred to me that I could be a scientist like Madame Curie or an engineer, it soon became clear that these were not things girls grew up to be. It was in my rebelliousness against this, and in my continued alienation from my parents, that I took up smoking, drinking and cussing.

At Stanford University in California in the early 1960s, I was a blackout drunk and heavy smoker. My capacity for alcohol was huge. I studied drunk and took tests drunk. I hardly ever attended classes, but, with my photographic memory, I could study for an entire course the night before the exam and at least pass.

In this era of free love, I only had sex with people I didn't care about. I discovered that I enjoyed sex and the perks that went along with it. At the time, men were still expected to pay for whatever constituted a date, be it dinner, tickets to the opera or trips to the beach. If that meant he might get sex, more power to him. I knew it was unfair that he would get labeled a stud and I would get labeled a slut, but such was the culture at Stanford and most other colleges – a reality that hasn't changed that much, even today.

Despite being a chain-smoking, hard-drinking, hard-partying woman, I still managed to get good grades. I still got to manifest at least the appearance of that vision I always had in the front of my mind. I would find love. I would be married. I would have children. I would love them, and they would love me, and we would all live happily ever after.

If only it were that easy.

### **IT LOOKED GOOD ON PAPER**

In my junior year in college, I met Bob, who said he wanted to be married and have a family and was committed to providing a good life for his family. After his graduation from Stanford in June 1965, he asked me to marry him. I said yes, and we planned our marriage for Aug. 13, 1966.

In June 1966, I graduated with a bachelor's degree in physical therapy and then spent five months completing the internships required for certification.

Bob had moved to Oceanside, California, in January 1966 after completing Officer's Candidate School at Quantico, Virginia. By then we racked up a lot of air miles traveling to see one another until I had my final internship at Los Angeles Orthopedic Hospital. I began driving to Oceanside every weekend to spend time with Bob.

After marrying in August and then returning to Southern California, Bob, by then a first lieutenant, left San Diego on a large ship, full of a few officers and 2,000 young Marines. Bob was assigned to be an air controller in Vietnam.

Meanwhile, I was living my vision: I was married and pregnant. I delivered our first child, Lisa, on

April 27, 1967, while living with my parents in my hometown of Yakima, Washington.

Soon, I realized that I knew nothing about parenting. I hadn't even babysat very much growing up. I had no idea what to do with children.

I used to hold Lisa nearly all day when she was a baby, walking to Montgomery Ward, where my mom worked as a credit clerk, to eat lunch with mom and her co-workers. Then I would go home and watch my favorite soap opera, *Dark Shadows*, holding Lisa as she slept. In July 1967, Bob had a rest and relaxation leave from Vietnam, so I flew to Honolulu to meet him.

One afternoon at our motel, I touched him unexpectedly, and he hit the floor. This is how conditioned he'd become to expecting danger while stationed at Da Nang. That was my first indication that Bob was no longer the man I married only a year earlier. He was traumatized by his service in Vietnam. He returned to Dong Ha, a Vietnamese city located in the demilitarized zone. Soon after, Bob was injured when the hut he was napping in was blown up. That was the beginning of his Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which wasn't diagnosed until he was 70.

As you may recall, it was the Vietnam veterans with all of their disabilities, including addictions and mental illness, who caused the breakthroughs in treatment of PTSD. All the years I have known Bob, I have been so impressed with his amazing sense of direction. What seemed like an incredible skill to me, someone who is directionally challenged and often lost, was, as a psychiatrist at the Veteran's Administration told Bob, "Your incredible reliably accurate direction sense is part of your PTSD. To stay safe, you are always tracking where you are and how to get out."

While Bob appreciates the disability payments from the government for his injuries related to the bombing, his exposure to Agent Orange and his PTSD, they haven't interfered with him having a life that he loves. He has, however, been impacted by the long list of medical problems related to his service in Vietnam. He also had his own addiction to sex, an addiction we have dealt with together. He's not always the nicest person, but he is the most honest, loving, supportive, empowering,

fun and reliable person I know. I was used to, in my young life, people who acted nice, and weren't. I learned to value things other than "niceness" in myself and others.

When Bob returned from Vietnam in December 1967, my vision of being a mother and wife continued to shape my life, even if I sabotaged it by drinking, often during the day with neighbors. When you are addicted, it occurs to you as if your survival depends on your addiction. You're not present to your life or yourself. I didn't think there was anything wrong with it. I lived in an era of absolute denial about what cigarettes and alcohol did to me.

We moved to North Carolina and lived in officers' housing in Cherry Point, North Carolina, where Bob finished his Marine service. Both of us were raised in the traditional roles of men and women, and we pretty much adhered to those roles. I recall spending an evening with our friend Mike and his wife. When we returned home, Bob remarked, "That was terrible watching Mike washing the dishes." Now, comments like that seem absurd.

After Cherry Point, we moved to Flushing, New York, in Queens, where Bob began Columbia Business School to get his master's degree in business administration, specializing in finance. Our second daughter was born on Jan. 3, 1969. I still had no idea what to do with children. Having not yet participated in any transformational work, I did what I knew. I found a job as a physical therapist at the Children's Rehabilitation Center at Queens General Hospital.

Nobody thought I should work with two young children to care for, one two months old and the other 22 months old. But my trust in the vision of happy wife/happy life again carried the day. Most women I talked with advised me to tell my children that I had to work so they wouldn't feel unloved. But it wasn't that I didn't love them; I just didn't know how to be loving toward them.

Vision allowed me to find this amazing woman, whom the children called Nursie. She took care of them while I worked three days a week as a physical therapist.

My neighbors used to tell me that Nursie took better care of the children than I did, which was probably true, since I didn't really know anything about raising young children. By then I realized that I knew how to be a working mom, and other people were better prepared than me to take care of my children.

Bob got his first job as an investment banker in New York City and we bought our first home in Princeton Junction, New Jersey. I continued to work along with my smoking, drinking and promiscuity. I again found a job as a physical therapist at Princeton Hospital. I was relieved to be back doing what I knew how to do.

This time, however, I worked full-time and had two daughters, ages two and four. My husband, like nearly all the men in Princeton Junction, left at six in the morning and didn't return until eight or nine at night.

Finally, overburdened with a full-time job, managing the childcare and maintaining the house, including handling our finances and taxes, I decided the only way out of my exhausting life was to get pregnant. When I saw a doctor to find out why my uterus had grown so quickly, the doctor said not to worry, "It's only twins." I was so relieved that I wasn't having triplets. In fact, I was so surprised by the news that I stopped at the liquor store on my way home from the doctor's office, hitting a car as I pulled out of the store parking lot.

I was distracted by the news of the twins enough that I didn't pay attention as I entered the road on which the liquor store was located. This particular inattentiveness, a symptom of dissociation, a sure sign of trauma, continued in my life until I entered college to become a somatic psychotherapist in 2007 at the age of 63. My trauma had occurred so young, e.g., as a baby, I didn't even know when I dissociated. That was certainly true that day. So engaged in what it would be like to have twins, I was totally inattentive to the car I hit until I hit it.

That is one of the characteristics of dissociation. It takes over one's life so that one is not functioning in the here and now. One of my favorite stories of my inattentiveness or dissociative trance was when the twins were two. Driving to the tennis club to play tennis with them in the back of our

LTD station wagon, I was focused on getting there because I was late. I was so dissociated that I hit a police car with his lights and siren on. When I felt the jolt of the impact, I stopped, looked over, and thought, "Wow, how did he get here so fast?" When I came out of my dissociation, I realized that I hit him.

I mention this because for people in relationship with those of us who may dissociate, often the other person may realize before we do, that we are not present or we are inattentive. It is as if we are in a trance.

Once I was able to identify the fact that I dissociated, which historically began as a defense or protection against what was occurring in my life, e.g., life-threatening or seemingly life-threatening episodes of trauma, I could catch it and come back into reality. Over time, I was able to identify triggers that caused my dissociation and became able to recover more quickly from my dissociative trances. As I became able to live in the present reality and stay in the present reality more and more, I found that living life while being "present" made life so much easier.

Before identifying my dissociation and accepting it as part of being a person with complex PTSD, it was as if I was living life, either totally dissociated, or in flickers of attentiveness. I realized why I so often heard, as I grew up, "Are you OK? Did you hear what I said? Are you paying attention?"

For those of us who dissociate the smallest thing, such as a tone of voice, facial expression, body sensation, thought or feeling, can initiate a traumatic reenactment. Living with a person who has a history of PTSD, particularly complex PTSD, which originates as a result of childhood trauma, can be challenging. My husband has learned to simply listen to me, knowing that, if he doesn't challenge me, I come to my senses eventually.

Sometimes he might say, "Wow. Other people don't say that about me," particularly when he has become a person, for me, other than who he is. Often, this will be a traumatic reenactment from my childhood. He literally becomes, for me, my mom, my dad or another abuser from my past.

For those of us with trauma, alcohol often

becomes a reliable source of immediate dissociation when life isn't going the way we want. That was occurring for me as I was fulfilling my dream of being a wife and mother. The gap between my dream of wife and mother and the reality of my life was painful enough that my addictive behaviors of alcoholism, smoking and promiscuity were increasing, the more and more I was, in reality, fulfilling my childhood dream.

To cope with the disconnect between my vision of motherhood and wifedom and the reality of it, in which I felt overwhelmed and underappreciated, I was smoking up to three packs of cigarettes and drinking at least four beers daily.

Our twins, Sean and Brady, were born into that world on Feb. 15, 1974. The smoking and drinking didn't seem that unusual for women of my generation, which you'd know if you ever watched *Mad Men*, the popular television series about American life in the 1950s and 1960s.

Probably because of my smoking and drinking, the twins' birth was not easy. Sean came first, weighing in at 6 pounds, 10 ounces. Then the chaos began. The second twin was positioned feet first. When his feet came out, he stopped breathing. The doctor put his own foot on the table for leverage, and pulled hard, which was when the anesthesiologist put me under. Later, I heard from my friend and Lamaze coach, Margarita, that it took four people to hold me down. Brady's chin was stuck in the birth canal. When his whole body came out, he still wasn't breathing, so the anesthesiologist leapt over the table to put him on oxygen.

I didn't see Brady for 24 hours while they assessed him for possible brain damage. I lost so much blood in the delivery that both Brady and I received packed cells, which is blood minus most of the fluid.

After four days in the hospital, I was sent home with no warning from my doctor that my smoking and drinking were bad for the health of me or my babies. Smoking was allowed in hospitals, including in patient rooms. One staff person suggested that I drink beer to help me have enough milk for the twins.

Can you imagine? My twins, both of whom are now doctors, can't believe that I smoked and drank during my pregnancy and didn't stop smoking until they were nearly four. My daily drinking and binge drinking didn't stop until they were six-and-a-half.

At that time, I thought, "Thank heavens for my smoking and drinking. I couldn't survive my life without them."

I didn't return to full-time, or even part-time, work as a physical therapist, even though I had a nanny lined up to care for the twins. As I nursed Brady and Sean, lying in bed and staring into their beautiful eyes, I realized that I didn't want to go back to work.

I also knew that I still had no idea how to be a mother. But I fell in love with them. I tell them that they were sent from beyond to save my life. Later, in my work with women who have addictions, I began to realize that a higher power sends us whatever will get our attention to give us a reason to give up the addictions destroying our lives.

Finally, I surrendered to my vision of being a wife and mother. I let my children lead.

### **HELP CLEANING UP MY MESSSES**

I made so many mistakes as a parent. With Lisa, our oldest daughter, I thought my job as a parent was to mold her into the kind of human being I thought was valuable. She was a ferociously independent spirit, though, and rebelled whenever possible. With our second, Char, Bob and I tried a different approach, grounding her for every infraction. Even though she is now 52, we say that she is still grounded. Her strong spirit also took over despite our valiant efforts to mold her into who we thought she should be. By the time Brady and Sean were born, Bob and I knew our previous approach was misguided; we simply surrendered to loving them and supporting them in the lives they wanted to lead.

Fortunately for all concerned, I felt compelled to do the est Training in 1982, and I began to come to terms with my history and abuse.<sup>1</sup> My commitment to transforming my approach to motherhood took over. By then, Lisa, 15 at the time, hated me. I, of course, had no idea why. During the training,

I realized why she hated me. I was a jerk, looking good to the entire community and being terrible to her. I called her stupid and lazy. When she came in second in the entire East Coast for the 100-meter butterfly, I asked her, "Why weren't you first?"

Of course, I was simply duplicating what had been done with me, and I soon recognized how distant I was to my own mother, who was viewed as a saint in the community but was terrifying at home. I wasn't terrifying, but my children had no real support from me either.

The Landmark Forum training was so inspirational that I decided I wanted to be that kind of human being, a person who could listen and speak in such a way that others discovered what they really wanted in their lives and set out to accomplish it.<sup>2</sup>

I was accepted into the potential Forum Leaders program in 1986.<sup>3</sup> But on the day I submitted my application, my older twin Sean, 12 at the time, ran away from home. As we were looking for him, I realized that I would participate in the work of transformation for the rest of my life, since that was the access to a world in which children were safe.

Fortunately, Sean had inherited my fear of the dark, so he came home. He said that he was very lonely that day in school because his brother wasn't with him at lunch. With twins, their primary attachment is to each other rather than to their parents. That evening, when he saw our relief and learned I had prayer chains going all over the country and that Brady and I had driven to all the places he might have gone, he realized how much he was loved.

Aside from this commitment to being a wife and mother, what really helped me heal from the trauma of my youth, addictions and mistreatment of my children was when I went to work at Options Recovery Services, a nonprofit that focused on breaking the cycle of crime, broken families and homelessness caused by addiction. Beginning in 1995, when my mom was dying, I began working with homeless people in Los Gatos, California, organizing local churches to participate with the pantry at our church. I also participated in a homeless advocacy group in San Jose, resulting in the city of San Jose housing homeless people.

During this time, I realized how much of a part addiction and mental illness played in the issue of homelessness. I moved to the East Bay in 1999 and met Dr. Davida Coady, who had begun a program for homeless people in Berkeley and Oakland. At Options, I worked with women who had been brutalized since birth and were facing relentless addictions. As I told the truth about my life to myself and others and received help for my own complex PTSD, I began to heal, becoming authentic, real and a key part of the staff, while watching thousands of men and women recover from their addictions, manage their mental illnesses and heal from their trauma.

I assert that my deep desire to be a wife and mom had continued to carry me through my life. In the work I did at Options, from the fall of 1999 until my retirement Dec. 4, 2020, I saw the difference it makes when an addicted mom gets clean. All of her children flourish or at least have a chance to heal. It is true that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." The thing about recovery is that the people you love forgive you, if you make amends by living. They don't need to remember the addicted days. They are thrilled to have you back, loving and attentive, being able to love both them and you.

My children are nearly 55, 53 and 48 (the twins). Bob and I have 10 grandchildren and three great grandchildren. They all know how loved they are by Bob and me.

When our eldest granddaughter married in 2014, her husband asked us how we stayed married for 55 years. Here is our response:

- We have a shared commitment to love, empower and support our children, grandchildren, and, now, great grandchildren.
- We have agreements about those arenas of life that are challenging, such as finances, clutter, sex and more.
- We each have a commitment for life itself. Bob's is health in the world, and mine is that every single person can have a magnificently fulfilling life.

So how does the vision of being a wife and mother, husband and father, live out for us today?

- For one, we presence our blessings. We have a tradition on the weekend before Thanksgiving where Bob and I look through all of our pictures for the year and pick about 150 that represent that year. We are reminded of the amazingly rich life we have. Invariably, a state of gratitude envelops us.
- We make family gatherings a priority. Since December 2000, we have taken annual family outings that include all of our progeny.
- Since 2001, we have taken our grandchildren on solo trips to foreign countries, letting them know how special each one of them is to us.
- Bob and I spent the past year, once a week, sharing stories of our lives in a memoir entitled, "Family Stories," which each family member received for Christmas 2021.
- Beginning in March 2020, on my birthday, we began holding family Zoom gatherings on Sundays. These include up to four children, three spouses, 10 grandchildren, one spouse of a married grandchild, three great grandchildren (if they're awake), Bob's three sisters and a brother-in-law.

At this point, I am 77 and Bob is 79. Our greatest joy is our family and being with them. We go on any trips the children invite us, each one memorable.

Finally, being fully vaccinated, we can resume our routine holiday travels.

Allowing vision to speak. What a gift. I am discovering that life demands that we listen, one way or another. Even if we have no skills to have the vision become a reality, being human is sufficient for vision to materialize. As we say in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, "and the blessings will always materialize, if we work for them."

Bob and I often say that we have done everything any human could do to destroy relationship. But with our commitment to family, embedded in a community of support for our commitment, we continue to grow and develop.

We have particularly treasured these last

coronavirus pandemic months together. Bob has his study and I have mine. In the morning and at night, we pray together, sharing our gratitude for our lives and letting each other know what our schedule looks like for the day. Our favorite time is when we get to sleep together. We have never spent so much time together in our lives. So, for us, the pandemic has been a time of blessings and the fulfillment of our shared vision of a beloved family.

NOTE: When Bob read this, he commented, "I think you are too hard on yourself. I think you have been a fabulous mother to our children."

IN RESPONSE: I did always love them wholeheartedly. Loving them and being loved by them transformed all of our lives.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The est Training, developed by Werner Erhard, was a precursor to the current Landmark Forum.
- 2 The Forum is the flagship course offered by Landmark and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs.
- 3 The potential Forum Leaders program, now retired, trained participants to lead the Forum.

# IF I HAD KNOWN OBSTACLES WERE NORMAL, I MIGHT HAVE ENJOYED THE JOURNEY

HILARY BURNS

## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to illustrate what got in the way of allowing vision to speak and how I overcame each obstacle. My vision is that all people are free to create lives they love, belong to a world community and to get and give away their greatness. My hope is that this paper will inspire others to keep going in the face of obstacles.*

## RESIGNATION

In 1992, I created a possibility in the Advanced Course, "Inspiring people to live the lives they've always dreamed of."<sup>1</sup> I went on to take the Self-Expression & Leadership Program.<sup>2</sup> Then, I became a coach in the program and eventually coached individuals on my own.

I loved extracting what made them happy and helping them manifest it in their lives. I stood for their visions and dreams and lived true to my declaration for a couple of years.

As life went on, however, I married, had children and stopped participating in "conversations for possibility." I had achieved my dream of having a family. I was thrilled.

In the past few years, I've realized that I had stopped allowing my vision to speak. Why? It's a great question. Looking back, I think that I got distracted and forgot about my declaration. Life was about raising kids, keeping them safe and healthy and getting through each day. My possibility didn't stay present. Feeding, dressing and otherwise caring for my children took over my life.

I also told myself: "Get your head out of the clouds, get real, you expect too much, you should know better. Figure out how to pay the bills and take care of the children. How can you inspire people when you're barely surviving each day yourself?"

I became a victim to my circumstances. My "possibility" disappeared. I listened to my thoughts as if they were real and did the best I could. Many years went by. It's just the way life was.

## LISTENING TO OTHERS

Nevertheless, I had fits and starts of remembering my vision. About 10 years later, I had a moment or two when I *tried* to allow my vision to speak. I thought that I could inspire people by writing about my experiences. I started a blog and wrote about what I was going through. I was proud to be in action. I loved writing. It brought me joy.

One day, I posted an entry on Facebook. I had a few moments of excitement, feeling bold that I was "playing *big*." An old high school friend thanked me for sharing so candidly. He related to my experience. I was so proud until I got two phone calls.

"Take that down," a good friend said abruptly. "You can't post things about your family. That is wrong. You **must** take that down." A few minutes later, I got another call from a family member. "Delete that right now. You can't post things like that."

Shocked, I logged onto Facebook and deleted my entry. I didn't question these people. I thought they knew something I didn't know. I was embarrassed and humiliated. I allowed other people's opinions and my discomfort to stop me. I made myself wrong for trying. "What was I thinking?," I told myself.

It took me years to post something publicly again.

### **REMOVING THE BLAME AND BEING RESPONSIBLE**

In 2010, someone recommended "Success Principles," a book by Jack Canfield. He wrote about being responsible, setting goals, finding your purpose and generating success.

"This sounds familiar. I used to have a vision," I remembered. "What happened to all that?"

I read the book, dusted off my purpose and got into action. I stopped blaming others for my circumstances, set goals and started feeling alive and hopeful again. I forgave my friend and family member for their comments and forgave myself for getting stopped.

"I **can** create a life I love. It's up to me. I **can** inspire others to create lives they love, too. That's the vision inside of me, and I can be courageous again," I told myself.

I set a goal to finish writing a book. This time I didn't let my thoughts stop me. I wrote about how I had gained weight and thought my only problem was my weight. When I started losing the weight and stopped numbing myself with food and alcohol, it was hard to admit that I didn't like my life. I felt powerless, wasn't doing what I enjoyed and felt like a victim.

Slowly but surely, I started talking to people. I became aware of what wasn't working and developed an action plan for creating a life that I enjoyed. Those actions empowered me.

I finished my book and sent it to a few local writers. Two suggested that I take a writing class. I was a little insulted, but soon realized I had never really learned how to write. Years earlier, I had transferred into Wharton Business School instead of staying in the liberal arts college at University of Pennsylvania, ironically because I didn't like writing papers.

After resisting their suggestion for a few months, I joined a writing class. Each week, I read a new chapter to my classmates. Their encouragement and positive feedback kept me going. I had a lot to learn but I was in a structure that supported me. My classmates became my team, and my writing teacher was my mentor. I wasn't in this alone anymore.

It took me seven years before I published my book. In that time, I learned how to write, my genre was called a "memoir," it was OK to publish "my truth" and I could change the names of people who could be incriminated.

### **PARALYZED BY FEAR AND THINKING**

In December 2019, my book was published. I had a few moments of pride, celebration and notoriety amongst my family and friends. My purpose in publishing the book was to inspire other women who may have found themselves stuck in a marriage or situation where they didn't see a way out. I had done it.

Unfortunately, those wonderful feelings were followed by a familiar sense of deep, paralyzing panic. *What will people think?* I was frozen, only this time it was too late. The book was already published. I couldn't delete it.

When I shared my fear with a friend, she responded with, "Well, you should have thought of that before."

"What have I done?" I wondered. People will know how pathetic and powerless I had been during my marriage. I was unfaithful due to a lack of sex and how my fantasies about other men kept me going. I was afraid they would think I was a terrible person, judge me and remove themselves from my life.

After a few sleepless nights knowing I couldn't undo this, I decided to use some of my techniques

for creating freedom. Instead of resisting my fear, I allowed myself to experience the body sensations that I had named fear. I dialed up the tightness in my chest, difficulty breathing and rapid heartbeat. Miraculously, dialing it up lessened its grip on me. I started talking to my Landmark buddies about what I was experiencing.

By sharing it with other people, I got to see how afraid I was about being judged and being told again I couldn't say all this in public.

Yet, it was an opportunity to grow. Thoughts that ran through my head included: Could I prevent them from thinking their thoughts? Could I control anyone else's reactions? Did they know better than me?

I was the one who had done the research on "speaking my truth." I was telling **my story**. My version incriminated my husband and some other men I had been with. I consulted attorneys and authors who told me that I could change the names, and I did.

What was more important? Allowing my truth to be told or allowing my thoughts, fears and other people's opinions to stop me?

After about a month, I grew into this new role of published "memoir" author. I still had the thoughts and body sensations, I just learned to include them. They came with stepping out of my comfort zone, being bold and becoming someone I haven't been before.

### **EXPECTATIONS NOT MET**

My book was published. Now what? People wouldn't know about it unless I told them. I realized that I needed to promote it. My brain was whining that I didn't know how and didn't want to. What was I going to let win? My feelings or vision?

I decided to go into the unknown. I started talking to people who had already published and promoted their books. I got some ideas.

During the next six months, I held several live book talks and a virtual book talk during the COVID-19 pandemic at the local public library. I was a guest on a couple of local radio shows. I started tracking book sales as a measure of the fulfillment of my commitment.

I decided to host my own book talk so I could put my books on sale. I found a nice pizza place that let me use a private room in exchange for us buying food. I invited everyone I knew. I posted it on Facebook and told everyone I saw.

I was so excited. I had a whole box of books. I was worried that I would sell out and not have enough. It was a wonderful night. Seven friends showed up. We had dinner and talked. I was grateful to have such supportive friends.

The problem was that all of them had already read the book. There was nobody to sell my book to.

We had a nice time, but when I got into my car, I burst into tears. Where were all the other people? I had told hundreds of people. I had a good cry, almost needing to pull over because I couldn't see through the tears.

Looking back, I remember my earlier internal conversation and how it had stopped me in my tracks.

I obviously don't know what I'm doing and I'm *stupid* for thinking I do. This whole thing was a bad idea. Who did I think I was? This was ridiculous. I *really* thought that I would become a best-selling author, get called by Oprah to be on her show and become a household name. How embarrassing, I thought.

My life as an author shut down. I forgot that I had even published a book. I stopped talking about it and went back to life as I knew it. I should have known better. My vision got buried under the "shoulds" and humiliation of the night.

### **HIDING FROM THE JUDGMENT OF OTHERS**

Even though my book was "buried," I still wrote in an old blog called, "Tired of Feeling Bad." I wrote entries when I was upset. It helped me create freedom for myself. I put them in the public domain so they could inspire others.

But I didn't tell anyone about them. I was gun-shy after my first attempt at posting. No one knew the posts were there. I held back telling anyone about them. I was hiding. I was afraid.

My commitment is that people are free to create lives they love. If I wasn't free, how could I inspire anyone else?

## A GLIMPSE OF FREEDOM

I knew that I wasn't living true to my vision. I was allowing fear to stop me. What was I going to do about it?

Then, in September 2019, in another Landmark program, someone posed the perfect question at the perfect time: ***"If there was nothing about you to fix and nowhere to get to, what would you spend time doing?"***

I sat in my chair with my mouth open. I had spent years trying to fix my moodiness, negativity, lack of organization, messiness and lack of femininity, amongst other things. I couldn't imagine a life where I wasn't trying to fix these things.

What if I was truly whole and complete? I allowed myself a few moments to think.

"Inspiring storyteller" popped into my brain. Yes. That would be a true expression for me. I love entertaining people by telling inspiring stories. I have been doing it. I just wasn't letting anyone know.

It was time to step out into the unfamiliar. Time to put my "real self" at risk. Put it out there. Be brave. Stop letting my fears and worries stop me. I am whole and complete. Judgment and opinions cannot hurt me.

## WHOLE AND COMPLETE

I started slowly. I made some YouTube videos under the name, "Getting Real with Hilary." I told my stories in an entertaining manner so that others could relate and be inspired. For example, I wrote about how I was a people-pleasing, pleasant person, and it was hard for me to stand up for myself and not be a victim.

My new self began taking new actions. Instead of getting stuck on the phone with a client in my day job, I told her I only had five minutes to talk. I avoided spending an hour listening to her problems of no relevance to our work so I could get my work done. I didn't spend all that time making her wrong.

Another time I told the story about how when I was growing up, I turned an insult from my piano teacher into the greatest gift I could give my

children. He had shamed me by recording my playing because I didn't practice. I couldn't stand listening to it. When my mother asked him why he was "making me cry," he told her it was because I had talent. I couldn't believe it. No one had ever told me that. I started practicing and eventually had a successful recital. I learned that praise motivated and insults did not.

I started sharing about my book again. I changed the name of my hidden blog from "Tired of Feeling Bad" to "Creating Life Out Here." I wrote more blog posts and told my friends about them.

People started reading my blog and watching my videos, thanking me for the illuminating and inspiring messages. A Florida friend told me she passed my video on about how I transformed a weight gain into a success to a friend of hers struggling with her weight. Another friend sent my video about how I turned a potential work war into a win/win situation to someone on the verge of getting fired.

I felt free. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I had extra time to think, write and record. I hired some high school interns to help me "get the word out." They helped me post to Instagram and Facebook. I started a weekly newsletter and created a mailing list to which I invited people to subscribe.

We began tracking our measures weekly: book sales, blog subscribers, Instagram followers, newsletter subscribers and Facebook friends. We analyzed what we were doing and saw what worked and what didn't work. When we saw that an article I had published in an online newsletter doubled our book sales, we searched for more opportunities for me to be a guest writer. When certain Instagram posts were shared, we copied what we had done to duplicate the success.

It was exciting, and I was nervous because I was going public. The good news was that we were only posting on my personal pages. These people were my friends. Were they not going to like me because I posted some videos? I hoped not. Could I really control what they thought anyway?

But I still got stopped. LinkedIn, a large and well-known professional network, was out of my comfort zone. Those were my business people. I wasn't ready to go there so I didn't.

## CREATING A TEAM AND HAVING COURAGE

I didn't really know if what I was doing with my high school interns was working. We were gaining a few book sales, "followers" and "friends," but so what? The numbers were still pretty low in my opinion. I didn't know what our strategy was or what we were really trying to accomplish.

A friend from my Wisdom Unlimited course introduced me to a friend of hers who had started a marketing company.<sup>3</sup> "Do you have a strategic plan?" he asked me.

"No," I answered honestly. We decided to work together. We created a strategic plan and an infrastructure for making my vision public. Part of the plan was posting my videos and comments on LinkedIn.

"Whoa," I thought. "This was crossing the line into my sales career, and this could have an adverse impact on paying my bills."

"Will I get in trouble for expressing my real self? Will the headquarters of our corporation revoke my sales contract? Will my bosses know I am doing something outside of work?" I worried. Again, I had to ask myself if I was willing to allow my vision to speak or hide behind my fear of judgment, embarrassment and shame.

Nevertheless, I continued to record videos of inspirational moments in my life. One video was a story from the Structural Connections vacation course.<sup>4</sup> I was told to talk to my body. I went to my hotel room, looked in the mirror and apologized to my boobs for being ashamed of them. I saw that in 9th grade, my boyfriend's father commented that I was "well endowed." Since then, I tried to hide my chest.

That day in the hotel, my boobs suggested that maybe it was a comment from an inappropriate pervert. When I shared this with course participants, they told me how smart my boobs were. One of the women had repeatedly told us she went to Harvard. I told them, "Well, my boobs didn't go to Harvard, but they did go to Wharton." I got a big laugh and made a video about it.

Another example is when I found myself focusing on the bird doo on my window instead of the

beautiful beach and ocean on the other side of the window. Suddenly, I had a new context for my life: Focus on my vision, not the bird doo in my life. I made another video from that experience.

The marketing company turned my videos into polished, professional videos and created the narrative to go with them. I started posting the polished videos under my YouTube name, "Getting Real with Hilary." The first week I experienced the same panic as when I published my book. I couldn't sleep. I used my techniques of not resisting, sharing my fears and distinguishing worst case scenarios. I knew that I wouldn't die, and I could just allow myself to experience the discomfort.

I was doing OK. I figured no one would notice my posts. I breathed deeply and experienced the peace of the current moment. Then, a few days later, I walked into my office as I normally do. "Getting Real with Hilary," my boss yelled. "Here's Getting Real with Hilary. It's Getting Real with Hilary."

I wanted to hide under the table. I could feel my face turning bright red. I wanted to run. I didn't. I just clenched my teeth and smiled. I survived his teasing. I even got used to it. As time went on, I even started liking it.

## BECOMING A CONTRIBUTION

In January 2021, the first month of posting YouTube videos, people were making nice comments. "I love this story, thanks for the lesson," and "I passed on your story to my friend who is struggling with her sister."

My son told me he was "really proud" that I was doing this. My daughter told me I was her hero. "No one else's mom is doing stuff like this," she said. When my boss' boss stopped me in the hallway outside of the ladies' room and told me he saw my videos, I thought that I was in trouble.

"Your videos are inspirational," he said. "Good for you. Keep going. It makes a difference. It's great you are doing this," he continued.

It took my breath away. My vision was speaking and people were inspired.

## WHERE DID THE MEASURES GO?

In November 2021, I was discussing measures.

"I don't have any," I said. But wait, I used to have them. In May 2021, I tracked book sales, Instagram followers, Facebook friends and blog and newsletter subscribers. I also started offering a course. So, I added course participants when I launched it.

"What happened?"

Answering my own question honestly, I realized that I didn't like the numbers. I didn't like what I was making them mean – that *this wasn't working*. I was stupid for trying, I can't be successful and I'm an embarrassment. My favorite flavor of making myself wrong.

I had forgotten all about my measures. Isn't that interesting? I wasn't even aware that I had stopped tracking them.

### QUESTIONING MY MEASURES

After this conversation, I found the courage to look at my numbers.

Shame and embarrassment filled my mind and body. *My numbers were not what I thought they should be at this point in my endeavors*. I didn't even want to tell anyone how low my book sales were. I was horrified. I started talking to a couple of my Landmark buddies.

One of them said, "What if you said it differently? What if you said 'Look at what I've done? Look at what I've accomplished? I'm a pioneer for freedom. I'm a published author. I am inspiring people all over the world and making a difference.'"

Hmm. Another buddy asked, "What if you could dismantle your shame?"

I looked at it honestly. Shame and "make wrong" are how I cover up disappointment. That's all this was. It was an unfulfilled expectation. An upset. I thought that I would have more sales, followers and people in my course at this point, and I didn't.

Instead of using my numbers as evidence that *"I'm not doing big things compared to other people and I'm not doing anything worth talking about,"* I could say something else.

What if I said, "This is the way life looks when it's working?"

Which context gives me power to allow my vision to speak? I think it's obvious.

### CREATING A PLAN

Now that I dismantled my upset, I wanted to get into powerful action again.

I created a year-long plan. I looked a year out at the measures I would like to accomplish. I worked backward, creating quarterly milestones that would lead me to success.

The process helped me to see certain items I had dropped and specific new actions I could take immediately. It was a powerful process that enabled me to truly visualize success with one possible roadmap for achieving how to increase my book sales, grow the number of people enrolling in my course, replace my sales income and expand the number of my newsletter subscribers.

Some observations that the plan helped me see were that I wasn't promoting my book (again) and wasn't telling people about my newsletter. I put reminders and actual tasks in my plan to get me going in the right direction.

### STILL DOUBTS REMAIN

There are times when I still wonder what I am doing. Is this making a difference? Where is this heading? I think that I need to know. I think that I need to be clear about the path I'm taking.

I have learned to let that go and trust the universe to take me where I'm supposed to go. What I'm doing may be drastically different in a year, but my vision will remain. I am a pioneer for freedom, an inspiring storyteller and, if I'm open, the path will reveal itself. I have learned to allow my vision to speak.

### BEING WITH THE FEAR

I have been posting on LinkedIn for over a year now. My book is out there. I have created a course for getting unstuck and people are creating miracles, achieving their dreams and generating the excitement and passion in their lives that was missing. My YouTube videos entertain and inspire. My newsletter and blog have people see themselves in my sharing and create freedom.

I still have thoughts of fear, but I let them go. Our duty as members of the world community is to live great lives. It makes a difference and, if we are one world community, then we all belong, are unconditionally loved and can love all others no matter what opinions people have, what our brains are telling us or when we are afraid.

## **SUMMARY**

My journey has been rich in obstacles. Sometimes I let them stop me for a while. Sometimes I can sidestep them, ask for help or use them to grow and develop. I was able to stop making my fears and thoughts wrong and allow them instead. I have created the freedom to go beyond what is comfortable. I allow myself to experience uncomfortable body sensations and thoughts and take the actions anyway.

I am proud to be a freedom warrior, creating new pathways for living great lives.

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## **ENDNOTES**

- 1 The Advanced Course is designed to follow The Landmark Forum. In that course, participants create an overarching possibility for their lives.
- 2 The Curriculum for Living is composed of the Forum, Advanced Course and Self-Expression & Leadership Program at Landmark.
- 3 Wisdom Unlimited is a nine-month course offered by Landmark.
- 4 Structural Connections is a week-long Landmark course held in an inviting setting and designed to be experienced as a vacation as well as an opportunity for growth and development.

# THE KATHY PROJECT

KATHY NORMAN

## ABSTRACT

*This paper explores some concepts in a Landmark seminar, Success: The Power of Context, and what the author discovered in that seminar about success – what it is and what it is not – and the role of success in her life.<sup>1</sup>*

I am in a good space. I am not in a hurry. I am not anxious. Well, sometimes, I am still worried.

I worry about my aging dog. I worry about our planet. I worry about politics. I think my worrying is different now than last October. Less tiring. I see new possibilities.

I know how I got here. I am not sure of the path.

Take my hand. I can show you.

The fall of 2021 began with three overarching events.

I wrote and submitted a paper to the Journal for the Conference of Global Transformation about including “team” in every aspect of my life.

I registered for “The Success Seminar: The Power of Context” and began looking at what is success for me.

I began hosting a podcast every Monday called

“Crypto Corner,” with Michael, a colleague.

In the Crypto Corner podcast, we talk about blockchain projects from the perspective of the project leaders and the potential project investors. A blockchain is a growing list of records, called blocks, that are linked together using cryptography.<sup>2</sup> The blockchain design makes it very difficult to be compromised.

Michael manages his own blockchain start-up (In the blockchain world, we call a startup a “project.”) and in September he had to focus full-time on his project initiatives and he left Crypto Corner. I continued hosting it by myself.

The topics are endless. The aspect of being “live” with no pause button is daunting and invigorating. I began organizing my life around preparing for Crypto Corner and avoiding thinking about it. In the beginning, I was terrible. Sometimes, my speaking would become halted when there was a pause in the conversation or when I changed the topic. Even now, my speaking is very halted at times.

Each of these events occupies space in my head, and I carried them through Thanksgiving, Christmas and into the new year. They will be in my head for a while longer.

## LOOKING BACK

After Thanksgiving and inspired by my seminar, I remembered a decision that I made in early

adulthood. I was in a pre-master's program. Many of my friends had graduated and left. I had few friends left, and I felt lost in the stampede of people going to class, meeting for coffee, sitting and smoking. (We smoked indoors in my university days.) I decided to focus my energies on my schoolwork. Friday and Saturday nights were a good time to get ahead of the following week's demands, and so it was. Whenever I was lonely, I filled in the time with homework. If I can't have friends, I might as well have goals and accomplishments.

In ninth grade, I learned that I could get an A or A+ by doing my homework and doing it very well. I liked getting a good grade. I felt smart and special. That was the beginning of my search for excellence or, I could say, my search for success. That was the beginning of chasing that feeling of being "smart and special."

When I was 5 years old, I helped my dad cook peaches and put them in jars for the winter. I was more of a hindrance than a help. I knocked over a large container of warm peach syrup that flowed over the edge of the table and dropped in long strands onto the floor. I knew this was bad, I didn't mean to do it and I didn't know what to do next. I stood still. I did not alert dad to the spreading disaster. He was not happy. I was sent out of the kitchen. I knew that I was a stupid girl.

In early January 2022, I began to see a thread connecting me and how I created my life from experiences I remembered. Now, when a friend calls, they sometimes say, "I know you're busy, and ..." or they leave a message saying, "Can you call me in the next few days? I know you're busy ..." or "You're always so busy ..." I remember dreading talking to some of my friends because they can go on, and on, and on. Don't they know I'm busy?

I saw that I put the people in my life on hold to finish the current project. As I shared in my seminar, "The people in my life don't know I love them because I am too busy."

### **THE SEMINAR AND THE PODCAST**

At the beginning of my seminar, I began looking at what I do that is successful and what I do that is unsuccessful. I realized failure is not an option for

me. With Crypto Corner, I expected to manage with ease the flow from one topic to the next all while recovering from the unexpected, such as a guest who does not show up or a technical breakdown.

Most of the time, the only joy I got from every Monday's Crypto Corner was the chocolate I ate during the podcast, followed by a few hours of streaming a show to avoid dwelling on the event.

I also identified something else in my seminar. I am stalked by faceless people who watch everything I do and judge me. I don't know when they showed up. Perhaps, they followed me out of the womb. How could I do self-exploration with Landmark and never realize they are hanging out watching? They are not very nice people. They mete out their judgment harshly, and they are very cheap with their praise.

They automatically approve of things, such as how I care for my dog and where I live. However, doing a smooth Crypto Corner or considering what car I buy next is harshly examined. Getting their approval is more important to me than my accomplishment. (They don't even exist, yet it is essential to get their approval.)

In the seminar, I identified my need to succeed as an attachment. I am attached to landing that Crypto Corner podcast with grace and ease. I am attached to those faceless people who turn their thumbs up or down.

Throughout the seminar, I practiced noticing attachment. The attachment showed up everywhere – editing an article in Medium, an American online publishing platform, for work, trying to stay ahead of the conversation on Crypto Corner, writing a computer program that executes flawlessly. Sometimes, I was attached to how I formed sentences when I talked. Along with my attachments, the faceless stalkers were there waiting and shaking their heads in anticipation of failure.

Occasionally, those hordes of faceless people left. When they left, I would breathe easier. I noticed things around me, like the cool crispness of the air or the beautiful plant on my desk. Rest assured, if you think they disappeared into some black hole, know they always come back.

When I discovered I was attached to the outcome of everything, I realized there had to be a way for me to do the best I could without contorting into a pretzel. I found that if I stopped wondering what people thought of me and simply did my job, everything would improve. I had to stop being attached and merely do what I enjoyed doing.

This plan did not work for Crypto Corner. Now, don't be confused here. I love doing Crypto Corner, and I hate it, too. I can't figure out why I'm not better at it. I continued to feel judged by the faceless people listening to the podcast. Sometimes, I thought I was getting better. I would practice the introduction and circulate the agenda to participants. An early December podcast went very well except I forgot to record it. Then I followed the same preparation for the following podcast, and it tanked.

During the podcast, I would work on being in the moment and then boomerang back to "I've got to do better." I would re-presence myself at the moment and be the person who provides information to people and then be yanked back to my mental chaos.

After one podcast was complete, I saw that I was oscillating between creating the podcast as an informative service and surviving it. If this is living a created life, it is sometimes messy, chaotic and confusing. Not at all like what I was doing in the past. The experience of being in the moment, then in fear and attachment, and so on was like being a graceful ballerina, then a grunting wrestler, then ballet, then wrestling – minute by minute, or second by second.

A sidebar regarding attachment: I started thinking differently when I began to live a life free from being attached to success. Though the faceless nonexistent people were still offering their views, I was not upset or surprised by a strong opposing opinion, and I began to see how the opinions were simply the different sides of the coin. I ceased to be angry or afraid of what could happen with the existence of such a strong opposing view.

## THE PAPER

I realized the paper that I wrote for the journal was another accomplishment done to be successful.

I did not agree with the topic or premise. I did not want to finish the editing process.

The editor reached out to me, and I realized that I had not communicated to her about my decision to forfeit the paper. I didn't communicate anything for weeks. In the era of COVID-19, the editor didn't know if I was alive or dead. After we reconnected, she invited me to submit a paper. I sat still for a moment. Did I (the real I, not the one stalked by faceless people) want to write a paper about my freedom from success? Yes, I did.

I wondered if I understood enough about my experiences from attending the seminar to articulate it. The paper started as a series of unconnected sentences. I saved what I wrote and went to sleep.

I returned a day later, less attached to writing a good paper. I outlined what had happened over the last few months.

I returned a day later, looked at the disconnected paragraphs and said to myself, "This is going to take me forever. There's a lot of work to get this into shape."

I took a break. Then I downloaded Wordle (a new kind of word game), read CNN's website and looked up possible five-letter words for PuzzWord, another word game. I realized that I had sat at my desk for two hours doing nothing constructive. I tried rearranging some paragraphs. Then I went into the kitchen and ate some homemade bread (delicious), peanuts and chocolate. I drank some hot milk. I realized that I was attached to writing a good paper. I went to bed.

The following day I began to connect the paragraphs.

Being detached doesn't make a good paper. However, it does make writing easier. It seems that being detached takes fewer calories.

## THE COST AND PAYOFF

I learned from Landmark courses that our destructive habits have a cost and benefit. The genesis of my "working hard habit" is the urge to be successful.

The cost of working “hard” is the people I love have a lower priority than my current work project. I diminished my appreciation of my family, friends and community. I am less connected to my love for them.

The people in my life didn’t know I loved them, and I didn’t get to experience them as fully as I could.

What is the payoff? What is the benefit of working hard? I had the perfect excuse. I avoided listening, listening and listening, and spending my free time with people. I avoided the messiness of relationships. I avoided confrontations and upsets.

### MY CONFESSION

I get compliments about Crypto Corner. Here are some:

“Once again congratulations on a well-directed crypto corner!”

“Congratulations for another successful Crypto Corner. Feels great to know all the incredible things these projects are doing to improve Blockchain awareness.”

“Thank you ma’am for the Twitter Spaces (we do the podcast on Twitter Spaces).”

I cannot hear the compliments when I am attached to producing a great outcome. I continue to remember what didn’t work well. I ignore what does work well.

When I am detached, I can hear the compliment.

### THE KATHY PROJECT

Many people call small companies creating a new technology or service a start-up. In the blockchain world, we call such ventures a project. Before people invest (using blockchain opportunities, such as staking) in a blockchain project, they evaluate the project by listening to interviews with the project team, reading the project’s White Paper, reviewing their roadmap, etc.<sup>3</sup> They look at the life and direction of the project and determine if they think it has a chance to be successful.

My life has been like a project – planning and executing the plan. My success is measured by good execution.

When there is no success to achieve, no place to go unless I want to and nothing to do unless I want to, what happens to my plan? I love learning more about blockchain, bringing in an income, continuing to tutor kids in math, and writing. I love my promise for the world that everyone experiences their greatness.

Maybe each of these things that I love to do is a project. A project that I get to run and plan, and replan, however I want to. There is no success or failure for these projects; they are the projects. Then, my life is better described as “Kathy’s Projects,” or, put more simply, “Kathy’s Life.”

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### ENDNOTES

- 1 Landmark’s evening seminars focus on topics, such as relationships, creativity, effectiveness, peace of mind and what it takes to make a difference. Seminars comprise 10 evening sessions, usually offered during a three-month period. Each session lasts about three hours.
- 2 Blockchain. Wikipedia. Accessed Feb. 1, 2022, [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockchain](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockchain).
- 3 Staking is a mechanism to earn passive income. In this case, the project earns the investor’s passive income and the investor earns project tokens. NULS website. Accessed Feb. 1, 2022, [www.nuls.io/sco/](http://www.nuls.io/sco/).

# I HAVE A DAUGHTER NAMED AFGHANISTAN

LORI WATKINS

## *Abstract*

*The author explores the connection between the current immigration crisis where so many Afghanistan refugees have been fleeing their home country and her experience of learning she was adopted.*

## INTRODUCTION

It's October 2021 and I am sitting on a bench in Provincetown, Massachusetts with my 13-year-old niece. I listen to her questions about children and marriage. She asks, "Auntie Lori, why don't you have children? Why haven't you been married?" I ponder her question and reply, "It wasn't an established goal or something that I was committed to at a younger age." I pause. Then, I say, "I haven't told this to your grandparents. I have been thinking of adopting a baby girl from Afghanistan."

Now, some months later, with the pandemic still raging, I'm not sure if I will adopt a baby girl from Afghanistan. But thinking about it – especially since the withdrawal of United States troops from Afghanistan between February 2020 and August 2021 – reminds me of my own story. The images of babies being handed to soldiers during the withdrawal has me start to write about my adoption.

I see the reality of Afghanistan refugees who are

not always welcomed even though churches and other organizations are supporting these families. As the New York Times reported in December 2021, "More than 74,500 Afghans have been given permission to live in the United States, at least temporarily, in the four months since the return of Taliban rule. Though they are no longer in immediate danger, many have had trouble navigating an immigration system that U.S. officials concede was wholly unprepared to help them."

"Thousands have stayed in squalid camps," according to the Times. "Others have been threatened by security forces as they transit neighboring countries. Even those who have made it to the United States worry about how they will afford housing and food."<sup>1</sup>

## ARRIVING IN AMERICA

I entered the United States for the first time at the age of seven. My family and I returned from living in Africa. Once we returned, I had to attend kindergarten for a second time. In time, I realized that hearing things twice provided a familiarity, a place to come from. I was used to the uncomfortable separation from what I knew, the unknowing and unknown.

One thing I loved was reading books with my parents. In fact, I would tingle with delight as I crawled into my father's lap for an afternoon of reading before dinner. Meanwhile, my mother, a dictator to her own measurements, worked in the kitchen at cooking, simmering and baking. From the kitchen came her audible vociferations. We would hear frequent gasps, ranging from

"It's burnt!" to "It's time!" Since then, I've come to think of that time as a front row seat to experience the "Kitchen from the Chaos" featuring the orchestra of the Watkins Quartet.

One afternoon, my father started to read a book to me titled, "Why Was I Adopted?," by Carole Livingston. My first thought was, "This is like a different country. Right?" Eventually, my thinking led me to say to myself, "This must be about my brother." Bradley is one year older than me. Later, I realized it wasn't about him.

But, somehow, I understood – even then – that this is a serious book, something I had never seen before and something no other kid had read to them. Interestingly enough, this book is still available today. As noted on the Goodreads website:

Written in 1978, "Why Was I Adopted?" is an up-to-date book that has been badly needed. It helps smooth over many an awkward moment between the adopted child and adoptive parent. Written after careful research and designed with tender affection, it covers a wide variety of questions children frequently ask about adoption. The language is straightforward and honest.<sup>2</sup>

As my father and I bowed our heads to begin our intense high-level inquiry of why I was adopted, he opened the book to the first page. In big bold black capital letters, the title reads: "Why Was I Adopted?" The next thing I noticed were the colorful cartoon illustrations of happy kids engaging in such activities as skateboarding and riding bicycles. They are wearing orange and green-striped sweaters and snug emerald green overalls. They have bright satisfied smiles on their faces. Either way, they look as though they were having a lot of fun.

The first page starts with, "Let's start at the beginning." I imagine that I am on a mountain top, swirling and twirling on grassy fields, like Julie Andrews in the movie, "The Sound of Music." The sing-along melody goes "Let's start! Let's start at the very beginning." My two big toes start to move in my tennis shoes, tipping and tapping to the symphony in my head. My father's animated facial expressions flicker and flutter with the tone of his voice. He is the muse serenading me with the prancing words.

As my father reads the words out loud, I hear syllables clicking and clacking, ticking and tocking beneath my father's tongue. I am reminded of the poetic song-maker Neil Diamond with an open composition of, "Hello, my friend hello." My eyes watch as the words twist and twirl into verses that take shape and form a breathing symphony that swims across the pages. As my father continues, I become alive with anticipation. Let's start, let's start at the very beginning.

## BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND

Eventually, I remember that someone once pointed me out as "being adopted." At that time, I wasn't sure what that meant. In fact, I really didn't know the difference between being adopted or not being adopted. I was so young, and, in some ways, it was difficult to understand.

As I think about it now, in some ways, being adopted was as if someone was saying, "Well, you really don't belong here." After all, there didn't seem to be any kinship. I experienced sadness at being separated even though I had frequent reminders of how much I was loved and cherished.

As the book continues, a single question arises with a wariness inside me, but making me feel important at the same time. Nevertheless, the Big Question haunts me: What are you? Another question follows: Who are you?

I remember the feeling that this was a "big person's" conversation, so I felt acknowledged by being included. This book also left me wanting to know more about my birth family, their names, who they are and where they are from.

Eventually, my parents answered those questions as best they could. I was born in 1976 in Santiago, Chile. On May 27, 1977, at the age of 5½ months, I was adopted by an American couple, Richard Watkins and Sudie Heitz. My father was a diplomat serving at the U.S. Embassy in Santiago.

Growing up, I remember peering into my adoptive mother's closet, marveling at the dresses from the different countries of Malawi, Ecuador and Indonesia. Eventually, my grandmother's furs joined the collection. My adoptive mother's German heritage also speaks among the patterns and designs. Each dress displayed a distinct

design reflecting various cultures that became part of me.

At the time, I came away with a sense of being unique and special. That may explain why as I grew into big shoes with bigger feet, I couldn't understand why other people couldn't see the uniqueness in themselves or others. Somehow, I felt as though I was showing up at a basketball game in my swimsuit. The deeper the inquiry, the heavier the significance which resembled wearing a wool sweater on a hot humid day in the summertime. It was stuffy and uncomfortable.

When we turn the page to the illustration of a young child carrying a suitcase, memories flood over me as my family and I return to the United States after a long period of living in different countries on different continents. The illustrations show big kids with big feet in big shoes. It reminds me of trying to keep up as a young kid in the airport, running from plane to plane to catch flights. I am reminded that I am adopted. I was naturalized as a U.S. citizen in 1977 when I was 1-year-old.

### **ASKING MORE QUESTIONS**

Soon, a most curious question emerges: What are good arrangements? I doubt that a 7-year-old would think about "good arrangements" for an adoption. How would a 7-year-old even ask this question?

I look at the pages. I am reminded of the oceans that separate the continents. The unfamiliar sounds of multiple languages. I want to play with them like building blocks. I remember my perception of odors at various markets in other countries. My nose gave way to the scents of kinky-looking fruit. I remember celebrating Christmas with no snow on the ground one year while living in Indonesia and the next year being covered in snowflakes because we moved to Quebec, Canada.

These experiences remind me of the character R2-D2 in the Star Wars movie. You may remember that R2-D2 was a standard droid whose personality and status developed over time. So, what are good arrangements? All these thoughts of my earlier experiences float through my mind as we read.

One page refers to grandparents and babies. I remember squinting to capture in my mind's eye the face of my grandfather. How old was grandpa? He was the oldest person I knew, and the first person I knew who died. He was blind and confused, yet he still knew who I was the last time I saw him.

Then, we came to the page about a two-minute baby. I was perplexed. The book says, "It's a gift not from a vending machine?" I am puzzled. What could possibly be the gift? It never occurred to me that I am the gift or my parents are the gift.

In turning each page, a new frontier of inquiries appeared: Do you wonder where people go to adopt children? Is it OK that I don't remember my birthparents? Can people really pick out the child they want? Does it cost a lot of money to adopt a child? What if my parents don't like me? Can they send me back and maybe get a new kid? Suppose I get angry and change my mind? Do my parents love me more or less than my brother or sister who aren't adopted? What about my birthparents? What if I want to know more about my birthparents? When I grow up will I have adopted children? Why did my parents tell me I was adopted?

### **ALLOWING CURIOSITY TO LEAD**

Around the age of 40, I was thrilled when my mother gave me this book. I couldn't believe she kept it. I immediately planned a time to read the story to my parents. I did that and then walked them to their car, whistling the Watkins Quartet in my subconscious. As they drove off to their next adventure, I waved.

Now, at 45 years of age, I question how I define the difference between birthparents and adoptive parents. It makes me a little uncomfortable to look. My curiosity leads me to Chilean Adoptees Worldwide, an organization for individuals adopted from Chile or within the country's borders.<sup>3</sup> That's me! A new world of understanding opens up to me as I read the explanation on the organization's website about how it came to be:

"In the 70s, 80s and 90s there has been a wave of children leaving the country and due to this phenomenon, they are currently spread all over

the world. These decades have known to be very difficult times for the country's history due to the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet."

Since some years, however, it is known that many of these children have not been left by their mothers and/or families voluntarily. As a result, today there is an official investigation in progress that tries to identify those involved. The official complaints of families who have lost their children under the strangest circumstances are still coming in daily and official numbers have passed the amount of 10,000 official declarations in the year 2018.<sup>44</sup>

Once I discovered Chilean Adoptees Worldwide, I submitted my birth certificate to the organization to start the process of finding my birthparents. This is an unsettling act on my part. I take a deep breath. I pick up the phone and call my adoptive parents. My mother answers. I said, "I submitted my birth certificate to begin the search for my birthparents ... I want you to know that you are my parents, you will always be my parents."

I hold my breath. My mother immediately starts to tell me stories of when we "got you." I smiled with relief. I got that I am their daughter, no matter what the outcome. They are the first ones I will always call. Here, I learn to trust myself again as I am called out into the world. A quote by Joan of Arc whispers to me from long ago, "But since God had commanded me to go, I must do it. And since God commanded it had I had a hundred fathers and a hundred mothers, and had I been a king's daughter, I would have gone." I admire the bravery of a 19-year-old young woman from 1412. I had to find out more about my birth family.

So, I take a deep breath and wait for any news from Chile. I expect to return to Chile which is a significant part of my global community. I will go and listen keenly for a new relationship. I will be with how the world made me to be, and I will allow those I meet to see me as I am.

Within weeks, I received an e-mail from Maria Stodart, a co-founder of the organization. She said, "I have now gone through your passport details. The RUT Number is a fake number. Can we have a Zoom meeting so that I can explain to you what I see and what is very irregular in the information I have got so far from you."

Is it possible I am one of those 10,000 babies? I may find my birthparents, or I may not. I experience the sadness of separation again. I feel the tug and pull of all my international experiences and being adopted. A long-ago question resurfaces, "What are you?" followed by "Who are you?"

As I continue to look, I discover a new admiration for motherhood. What would it have been like for my birth mother to have a baby during a dictatorship? Or my adoptive mother to take on being accountable for a life during Pinochet's rule?

I imagine it may have taken much grace, courage and trust to give up a child for adoption during a dictatorship. A boldness to seek out partnership with others who may have been known or not – all to grant safe passage of a child.

### **EXPERIENCING ADOPTION ANEW**

Suddenly, I experience being adopted again, except now I see that I was born into a global context from the beginning. I so want to shield and protect myself from the experience of that first separation. It was my first wound, though I didn't realize it until recently, and I felt like an injured animal.

Yet, I am waiting for the possibility of connection. I am moved like the strumming of a cello in a heart-centered world. I am tuned to the importance of my commitment to honor connection, family, peace of mind and abundance. I wait patiently, checking my e-mail daily to hear of any news about my birth family.

I now see the United States is like an adoptive parent for people from other countries. I smile to myself. Big kids with big feet in big shoes. Who am I for those big kids? Who am I for Maria Stodart? I continue to look and ask more questions. I think back to the adoption book.

What I love about the adoption book is that I was always encouraged to ask questions. It was considered OK to wonder about certain things. In the book, it says, "Being adopted means being a member of a family ... your family." I see my parents reading this book to me wanting me to know what happened.

I went on to grow up, become a nurse, explore

being an artist and am living a great life. I continue to create new series of paintings. My latest creation is entitled, "The Distinguished Graduate." I explore other mediums of expression such as producing and editing videos for organizations and nonprofits to share their self-expression.

The best part of this life is that I have a global family that keeps expanding!

### LOVING AS ANOTHER BEGINNING

I marvel at meeting so many different people during all my experiences. I see their greatness. I wonder: Who will I meet next? Who will read me the next story? With whom can I share the next adventure? I am eager to hear the syllables of a long-ago language lingering in my mind, playing them between my lips like a flutist.

What would my ancestors have to say, or what would other Chilean children now grown up say about growing up around the world? Are their passions the same as mine? Have they found a home or returned to their home country?

I think again about the refugees coming to America from Afghanistan. When I reread my book, "Why Was I Adopted?," the words that speak to me are "Being adopted doesn't make any difference in the way people love." How true. Now, if enough of us can be generous enough to help these migrants settle into their adopted countries, what if we said, "Being a migrant doesn't make any difference in the way we accept and love you."

I look at the Merriam-Webster definition of adoption. Adopt; adopted; adopting; adopts: to take by choice into a relationship, to take up and practice or use, to accept formally and put into effect.

I explore looking from we are all adopted. In writing this journal article, I recognize that I am like an adoptive parent with an international family. This article is about more than connection between refugees and adoptees. It's not about a baby girl from Afghanistan. It's not about thinking of adoption. This article is about the connection of humans to their humanity. As a Landmark graduate, I am moved by the possibility of all of it.

I named this article "I Have a Daughter from Afghanistan" because it's about standing where I don't belong *until* I am rooted. I am a stand for relationships to sculpt a global existence that includes each of us.

So, it's simple and starts with a melody. A sing-along melody from a long time ago comes to mind. I hear the clicking and clacking like tapping toes that says "Let's start! Let's start at the very beginning." I tip my head to the right, then left and start to grin. It could be a new beginning for me and many others.

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### ENDNOTES

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# THE BLESSING: BEING WITH A-FIB

TIM HARTFORD

## ABSTRACT

*This is a story about my journey since I ran the Detroit Thanksgiving 10K Turkey Trot. By the time this article is published, two-and-a-half years will have gone by. It is meant to be a historical, transformational, inspirational and funny view of my life. I am 69 years young, such a grand number. It's my first time writing an intimate glimpse into my life. When I started my journey, I had no idea where it would all go.*

## THE JOURNEY

It was Nov. 28, 2019, a typical, damp, cloudy and chilly day in Detroit, Michigan. I was getting set to run the 10K Turkey Trot. Voices in my head questioned my sanity. Am I insane to run today? Little did I know my life would never be the same. My mom would often say, "It is good we do not know what's in front of us," mostly due to our inability to just deal with life. Oh, what a wise woman she was.

The air was so cold that when I took a breath

my chest and lungs were angry. It was as though they were asking how could I do that to them?

I had done a half marathon of 13.1 miles in mid-October. Just six weeks later, running was a completely different experience.

During the next few months, I experienced times when my breath and ability to breathe were just not right. My wife, Sara, and I snowbird in Hilton Head, South Carolina, and I hoped that everything would be OK once we got there. Over the next few months, I experienced a series of starts and stops to living my life to the fullest.

In March 2020, I met with an allergist over Zoom and had a face-to-face with an internal medicine physician in Hilton Head. After a successful stress test, I received the OK and started running again. Runners always feel that running solves life's immediate problems. When you are not running, you are not living life to the fullest.

Before returning to Michigan, I trained myself to listen to my body, help it guide and direct me as to what I should do. In early April, I upped my training and made progress with my breath and distance. But a nagging voice kept saying something's not right. Sometimes I had breath, sometimes not. Another aha moment came as I began taking detailed notes of how I was feeling and progressing. Testing with the allergist ruled

out asthma.

By late June 2020, I found myself at urgent care. Everyone was alarmed. An electrocardiogram, which measures electrical impulses in the heart, was off the charts. Soon, I was in an ambulance headed to the hospital. It is funny how, for me, in time of crisis, I tend to go inside, pray and visualize what I want the outcome to be. Is it because of all this transformational training that I have become an expert at surrendering?

The paradox was I was riding in an ambulance, yet thinking of myself as this healthy, physically fit guy. It made no sense. Talking with the ambulance attendants, I tried to learn more about them. Yes, that is what I do, get related, trust the process and surrender to it all. Another aha moment. I had a high level of peace. I said it is all in God's hands. I will be fine. Finally, someone will find the underlying cause of this. I will be back running soon.

Now stabilized, the emergency room doctor began to ask me questions. I explained my story in detail. I mean it is Tim Hartford here, this advocate for humanity and transformation, not your ordinary 67-year-old on the table. The doctor looked at me and said I have A-fib. Huh, I have what? He looked at me and said you are going to be OK.

Atrial fibrillation, or A-fib, is a fluttery heartbeat also called arrhythmia. It means your heart's normal rhythm is out of order. Your blood isn't moving well, so you're more likely to have heart failure. Also, blood can pool in your heart and form clots. If a clot gets stuck in your brain, you can have a stroke.

During this time, I was in Wisdom Unlimited for the Arts. The training, the deep work was taking over. In that moment, I began to ask myself: Who am I? What am I here for? What am I to learn from this? How am I creating and recreating myself and what future will I live into?

I hate labels, which is what I got with the verdict, A-fib. Ugh. In that moment, I said that I am making lemonade out of the lemons and will overcome this. I saw various doctors to ensure I did not have asthma. For a month I did breathing tests. I used an oxygen meter and assessed myself three times a day.

When I found an A-fib expert in Troy, Michigan, I was beyond excited. She was collaborative and cared for professional athletes with A-fib. She wants me to live my best life and make sure I am running.

*During this time, I led three breakout sessions at Wisdom Community Saturdays. The overriding theme: Being. The questions helped me to learn from others and look for ways to apply their approaches in my own life.*

## AN INQUIRY INTO BEING

As a self-proclaimed "doing" machine, I have been looking at how do I make the shift to *being* – just *being with it all* – life, health, COVID-19, All Lives Matter, politics, family. Now, rinse and repeat. Every waking moment is an opportunity, that blank canvas if you will, to create *how* I am going to *be*. So, in those three breakouts, I asked such questions as:

- If you were to interview someone who is *being*, what do think they would say is their secret?
- If you had a blank canvas with crayons in your hand, what symbol or drawing or colors would you use that represents *being*?
- Who could you share with about what you experienced in *being*?
- What does it mean to "*be*?"
- Have you ever experienced anyone mastering *being*? If you have, what have you witnessed?
- How would we apply this new discovery of *being* to life?

From the breakout group experience, what kept opening for me was: How do I recreate my life inside a new rule book? How do I apply *being* to every waking moment of my life?

By October, the fact that I was a runner ate away at me. When can I get back to it?

Back at Hilton Head in November with Sara, I spent the month exploring how can I just *be* with it all? As a self-proclaimed doing machine, I knew "being" was a new muscle. A new way of living my

life. I practiced deep breathing and visualized the life I wanted. With A-fib, I found it meant that one day I could be active, and the next day I sat on the couch watching life pass me by. It became my new normal. I kept asking myself how do I make peace with this? My inner voice told me to get back to running, to just get back on the court.

In December, I started using the run-walk method. Running is my happy place, that zone of life which allows me to escape and be with it all. One of the best pieces of advice my doctor gave me was to live my life, just do what I love. Over the next few months, I increased my speed and length of runs. I focused on making it fun and just being OK with my times, no matter what they were, was pure joy for me.

In February, I began working remotely with a trainer to strengthen my core and put training plans in place. I was excited and joyful to be back. Call it a blind spot, or whatever, but when I make up my mind, I expect that it will all align, and I will make it happen. Sometimes, it was a matter of my body laughing at my goals.

In early March, I hit a wall. I did not have enough breath when I ran. In a quick Zoom call with the allergist, he said mold spores, moss and allergens were impacting me. You never know how the body will respond. You can pray, visualize, *be* and envision the desired outcome, but your body can go sideways. In my heart, I knew it was not allergens or asthmatic-type symptoms, but my A-fib. The doctor had changed my meds and none of them enabled me to live full out. In the moment, I thought this is not supposed to happen. I have a race to train for, a life to live and it is just not supposed to be this way.

I met with my heart specialist in early April. I came with my questions, data on my performance and thoughts on my options. She felt that I was a viable candidate for a new procedure known as pulse feed ablation. Doctors use an electrical current to zap the A-fib. I was intrigued since I would be part of their year-long study. I liked the fact that I would be contributing to science and my hospital was among 10 U.S. sites performing this process initially evaluated in Europe. In May, I underwent various tests and learned my heart was healthy and strong. All the plumbing (heart functions) was working well.

Approved for the A-fib procedure, I was excited, optimistic and driven to change my life. My dream of running and training became closer for me. On May 23, during the Conference for Global Transformation, I went out for a run. It was this pristine spring day in the suburbs of Detroit. Running that morning, I became overwhelmed with joy, love and passion for life. I glided along the path. When I run, I can get into this deep emotional state while also focusing on my run.

Back at a conference breakout, we spent 15 minutes doing a writing exercise. In that moment, it all poured out of me. My first poem or composition, "Why do I Run?" Over the next few days, I wrote my next poem, "A Fib, the Blessing." I shared my poems with others. They were so moved by them. Wow! I was making a difference just by sharing my journey.

The date for the procedure was set for June 15. There I was, lying on the table as the nurses get me ready. The point of entry is my right groin. I survey the room in awe at the teamwork's precision. I have a profound sense of calm, that all is well and surrender to the flow of it all.

The anesthesiologist starts talking to me, a big mistake since I find out he is a runner. I share with him I am running the October 2021 Detroit Free Press Marathon. He shares he is doing the half marathon. A new friend for sure, then my doctor stops by to answer any questions before it is lights out and time for the procedure.

My doctor worked on me four hours and said my heart was aglow with A-fib. Back in my hospital room, Sara shared how pleased the doctor was. The procedure went well. Facing west, I notice the sun glowing in the sky. In that moment, I felt as though an arm was extended to touch me to gain peace and safety. I began to pray for this phase of the journey, for the gratitude for a successful procedure, for the lessons I had learned about how to be in life and for a new way of living. I felt complete. It was all a miracle. I later learned that I was patient 19 out of 22 selected for the experimental surgery.

Every hour, Stacie, my angel nurse, checked on me. She monitored the incision area, vitals and pulse. Every time she took my pulse in my feet,

she jumped with joy. I told her each time, I am a runner, what else would you expect? She did it with such passion. I felt so taken care of. As I laid there, my thoughts went to: What will running look like now? Will I have enough breath? Will I have stamina?

I drifted off to sleep and woke up at 2 a.m. I had a roommate, an 84-year-old man who had fallen. I listened to the questions and the lack of coherence that was going on. I thought to myself, I do not have any problems. I am strong and healthy and have so much to live for. For me, it is all a miracle, this life of mine.

At my six-week check-up, I got the green light to resume all normal activities. As a proud new author, I shared my poems with my doctor. She read them and was excited about my way of being. She talked about sharing them in her medical community.

I started core training and running with 15 weeks left before race-day on Oct. 17. I was in tears as I started running, yet wondering will everything work? Will it be different? Will I have breath? The joy of running fuels me, feeds my soul. I continued to make great progress training over the next few weeks. My meds were reduced and eventually eliminated. During my September 2021 follow-up visit, we talked about my progress, and I reminded her that race-day is just weeks away. She looked at me in a shock of joy and excitement that I am fulfilling my goals.

Since I used the run-walk method, my running routine was such that I would have two short runs and one long run each week. The goal was to build up to 22 miles and let the training take care of me being able to run the full 26.2 miles on race-day. My 20-mile run felt so natural; my body, mind and breath as one.

On race-day, the pure joy I experienced of being there was beyond comprehension; from hospital bed to marathon in the span of months. A four-hour heart procedure was accomplished, and I felt like a victor before I even left the starting line. At 6 a.m., standing amongst the crowd, I was engulfed in the spirit of the race.

Sara dropped me off, and all I could hear was "Go runner boy, go runner boy." Tears of joy streamed down my face as my coach and her husband

greeted me. I did it, I am here. At 7 a.m., the race began in waves. It was a crisp dry morning. I got into a stride and listened to my body to find the best pace.

At mile 18, I hit the wall. I was angry, tired and "on it," as we say in Landmark. Why was this happening? What is the lesson? Why now? I cannot stop, I have to keep going. I had run past 18 miles before. One never knows when the body has other plans. I started walking. The crowds kept cheering me on. My mind kept saying to run. My body said walk. My left knee was sore. I limped along to see if it would go away. Another lesson on "being" stared at me.

I began to explore, so why do I run? In that moment, I decided that I must finish this race, even if I must crawl the last three miles to the finish line. If Terry Fox, a great Canadian runner, could run 26 miles each day with a prosthesis for his other leg, then I could walk three miles.

It was bittersweet. My coach joined me. We walked the remaining three miles and crossed the finish line together. I finished. Overcome with pure joy,

### **Why do I run**

To be first to visit a new day in the morning

While I wink at Nature's beauty and God's creations

To wave at the birds and nod at the turtles

While I breathe in the fresh air of a new day

To shoot for goals that seem bigger than me

While the body thirsts for achievement and the mind is focused on the prize

To run is a gift, body, mind and soul all in harmony

While God shines a light, I embrace it all with joy

To run, to run, oh because I can!

I hugged Sara. Her sister, Cindi, and her dog, Beau, and our Chance also loved me up.

In life, I found when someone says something cannot be done, my brain does not know what to do with this information. I simply must prove them wrong and do it.

After a few days of soaking and massaging my sore joints, we had a celebration dinner. As Cindi put it, "It does not matter what your time was. You finished and that is all that matters." I have reflected on that point; I finished the Detroit 2021 marathon. No one can take that away from me.

Now, I am beginning to develop my 2022 training strategies. My goal is to run the Detroit Free Press Marathon and qualify to run the Boston Marathon in 2023. I am enlisting anyone and everyone in this goal. I welcome the zigs and zags in life as they become my best teachers.

I am a runner, and it is all a miracle!

# THE WAY OF TRANSITION: LISTENING FROM STILLNESS

JUDITH OWENS-MANLEY

## ABSTRACT

*Transitions in life are inevitable and often associated with loss and feelings of dislocation. Two authors, William Bridges and Michael Lindsay, propose respectively that how we interpret endings is key and that transitions are “hinge moments” – opportunities to forge different pathways in life.<sup>1,2</sup> From experiences with endings that are varied and plentiful, I listen for what’s next in a transition which is usually labeled as “retirement.” The exploration inspired me to listen from stillness with nothing pushing or pulling, allowing vision to speak.*

Transitions in life are inevitable. With jobs, relationship status, friendships, membership groups or the communities we belong to, change is inevitable. We often associate transition with loss and experience a kind of dislocation, a strange kind of ambivalent space where we’re neither here nor there. William Bridges, an American author, speaker and organizational consultant, has written extensively about transitions in life as a call to navigate change, to move into more hopeful futures.

Key to making transitions work, Bridges proposes, is how we interpret endings.<sup>3</sup> From another perspective, Michael Lindsay, president of Taylor University in Indiana, suggests that our life transitions can be thought of as “hinge moments” – opportunities to open or close doors to the many different pathways available to us in life.<sup>4</sup>

I’ve had plenty of experience with transitions in life, recreating myself and veering off in new directions. I had moved six or eight times by the

time I finished high school, and I had umpteen jobs in different communities ranging from waitress, work that I began at 15 and returned to periodically, to clinical social worker in my late 20s and continuing for three decades, to university professor in my 50s. I divorced three times with a fourth marriage holding strong these 25 years later. But, more recently, I’ve been exploring the ending typically called retirement, an important transition in later life – sidling up to it, “walking the course,” as I’d done years before running races, to anticipate the hills, where the road might narrow and where I could pick up speed.

## A SEARCH FOR ANSWERS

About three years out, I started interviewing people. “How has retirement been for you? What have you found yourself doing? How have you adjusted?”

I always got a cheerful and breezy, if somewhat bland, answer, “Oh, I’m busier than ever! I don’t know how I ever worked.”

But, what were they doing all day, every day, 365 days a year? Sure, some people were traveling, but I didn't see myself having the funds to do a lot of that – or a willing husband. I didn't know how to get in a deeper conversation, to find out what I really wanted to know:

“Where do you get a sense of accomplishment? What do you find to be proud of now?”

I thought that I would need that kind of vision, a new kind of satisfaction, to be happy.

Retirement conjures up a ceremonial end to a long and important part of an adult life, but then what? I wasn't going to get a gold watch, but I did want to peek through the haze of the next few years, make sense of the nothingness that I was getting ready to step into, to know what lay beyond. I found my interviews to be of no help at all except for the vaguely reassuring sense that people seemed to be happy. But would I be?

Lindsay describes transitions as a process and suggests: At their core, transitions are internal adjustments by which we reorient ourselves to new environments, experiences and seasons of life.<sup>5</sup>

When I finished my job at the university nearly three years ago, it did begin a new season of life. I'm at home every day, no longer in my university office, and I haven't missed it at all. I seized the opportunity, though, to have a small paid position on a five-year grant before I left. Was this a sort of parachute for lessening the internal adjustments? Did I drag my feet, needing to slow the change?

I got the assurance of continuing contact with faculty, knowing that I would be engaged with ideas and research, and still have an identity with the university. I use the university's e-mail server, have a title, though not an office, and do “important things.” I get paid a little extra, since this transition includes the age-old question, “Do I have enough money?” The time of retirement seems to be all about enough. Do I have enough? Was I enough? Am I enough now? When and what is enough?

### **A SEARCH FOR SATISFACTION**

Now officially retired from the university, I am preparing to retire again from a second job as a

program leader with Landmark, an organization that I've thoroughly enjoyed working for. Another ending, sparking another review. When I retired the first time in 2019, I had every indication that people were more than satisfied with me, and I liked my job. But I wasn't sure that I was satisfied with myself.

Surely, I could have done more, published more, grown the department that I was in charge of and demanded more of myself. Now, again with this second retirement in 2021, I know that I did well, but did I excel? What would have been enough? My co-workers plan for a future that doesn't include me, and I am, by turns sad, excited, irritated, engaged, resigned and sometimes at peace.

I'm fearing that I'll miss the sense of being needed, busy and important. This taking stock of my accomplishments as I leave the traditional working roles does leave me with lingering questions. Did I think big enough? Create a big enough world for myself? I don't want to get to the end of my life and feel as though I missed something, as though none of what I've done really counts.

### **MODELS OF ADJUSTMENT**

I still don't have all of the answers. It is a progression for me, as it may be for anyone who retires, a reluctant, slower letting go of the trappings of a formal working life with that schedule and accountability. Years ago, while visiting friends in Florida, my husband, Brian, and I met a couple who retired at 55. They seemed happy to enjoy each other's company.

“We have coffee in bed every morning, read the paper,” they boasted. “We get up around 10 a.m.” My immediate thought was, “I don't think I could stay in bed every morning until 10. I'd have to train for that.”

The thought of it was suffocating. Surely, I would lose my verve, my sense of self in that void of sleeping late, not having to be anywhere. I was up and moving by 6 a.m. I knew myself as someone full of energy and ready to go in the early mornings. These late sleepers had worked for a state organization in a wintry climate before moving to Florida, a stereotypical retirement, less

available now for many, as benefits changed over the past few decades. Is 30 years with the same organization, day in and day out, at least a clear finish line, an unequivocal indicator that it is time to go, you are done?

"State workers," says my husband, "They start talking from Day One about when they are going to retire; it's all they look forward to."

Was this their vision for later life? I had similar models of retirement closer to home. My grandmother retired at 65 as a loan officer at a bank where she worked for 30 years, and she did get a gold watch. She left it to my sister, Christine, when she passed away at the age of 81, and Christine later gave it to me thinking that I might wear it. It sits in my jewelry box; it's hard to keep it running.

My grandfather died of cancer just months before Nana finished working. They did everything together, had probably looked forward to their retirement years, and instead she was alone for 16 years before she died. His death was devastating for her, but once she dealt with her grief and her own breast cancer along the way, as perhaps her "hinge moments," she did seem to create happiness in those last years, taking road trips to see her family and even a train trip across the Canadian Rockies with a friend.

I also had a favorite uncle who retired as a pharmacist from owning his own drugstore. For years, he overworked, had extra shifts and managed the store as well as the pharmacy. When he retired, well before age 65, my aunt told me he intended to "sub in," take work as a pharmacist, without the other accountability. But, in fact, he sat down and never got up again to work at all. I watched my stepfather do the same thing.

My parents did take a few trips, but once my stepfather retired from his job as a design engineer, mostly he could be found in his Barcalounger, back in the family room on any given day until he died at 90. The same spare pre-diabetic breakfast cooked and served by my mother, the same television shows, up for lunch and dinner and back to the too-small, closed-in life in the family room. My judgment, of course, of his closed-in life. "Is this how it ends?" I thought.

## PATHWAYS TO INTEGRITY

This last major developmental stage of older age, as described by the psychologist Erik Erikson, suggests that we search for meaning in the life that we've led up until a final finish line of death.<sup>6</sup>

My mother is 95 and still going strong, so this could be a long phase of life for me. How will any of us resolve what Erikson calls ego integrity versus despair – our ability to be satisfied with self and what we've accomplished and will accomplish still? How not to dwell on opportunities missed, questioning the substance of our lives?

Maybe being proud of our accomplishments is fleeting for human beings. I was thrilled as a 28-year-old when I completed my bachelor's degree in social work in 1979, long after what might have been expected: a decade, two divorces and two children from the time I started. I was excited to find social work as a major and work in a child guidance clinic when I graduated, doing clinical assessments of children and families. But it took me 10 years for a four-year degree, and my opinion was one I assumed that everyone had. "It's about time she graduated. Nothing special about that."

I was excited again when I completed my master's degree in social work in 1983, moving faster now. A dedicated student, I completed two internships, one on an adult ward of a state mental institution and the other in a residential children's center, which was also where I got my next job as an individual and family therapist and program director. At graduation, I said gleefully when I walked down the steps, "I'll never have to drive the two hours each way here again."

Yet, several years later, I found myself making that trip to earn a Ph.D. I kept wanting more – to know more, to be more and to keep growing, though I had no particular picture of what I wanted to grow into. I knew that I made a difference with people in my work, and I was moving from doing that at an individual level to being interested in organizations and communities.

I loved being a social worker, so why wasn't it enough? Was I too driven? Not ambitious enough? At some point, I wasn't even proud of having a

Ph.D. It was in social work after all. It wasn't as though I made much money or had a law degree or a medical degree. I had never intended to work at a college or university, but when I was nearly finished with my Ph.D. in 1999, I interviewed and was hired as the director of an innovative college-community partnership.

I coordinated projects that faculty and students worked on together with community members, *e.g.*, food insecurity, low-income housing and the efficacy of substance abuse courts, and I taught one course each year to undergraduates. It was an experiment with little assurance of job security; a little risky to step into, but a new edge to explore.

I was an anomaly there. It was a stimulating and creative position, but I was an outsider in a snooty institution. When I had ideas for how we could expand, there were layers of permission and considerations of how it fit with the hallowed halls. My academic background was not considered equal to theirs. I hadn't earned my way through the ranks. I published articles and book chapters and co-authored a book on refugee resettlement, but it seemed that wasn't enough.

### **TRAVERSING A HINGE MOMENT**

When a faculty member in a rotating position above me began openly planning to do away with my job, 12 years after I started, and to redesign the center that housed my work, I was 58. I floundered, upset and lost for a few months. I felt raw, tender, as though I failed, and I wasn't used to this kind of ending with work. Embarrassed, feeling pushed out of a job that I enjoyed and intended to stay with, I wondered what to do next. Although I still had a part-time psychotherapy practice, I didn't wish to return to doing that full-time.

But, one day, I came home from work before my job officially ended, and I told my husband, Brian, that I applied for a job in Alaska. The job came across my computer screen, was perfect for me, and I thought, "Why not?" I didn't know how he'd react, but the work that I had begun doing in community engagement within higher education was very specific, and I hadn't found anything with which to replace it. He was skeptical but willing to go, as it turned out, when months later, I was offered the job.

We left my elderly mother, our five adult children and all of our friends; it was very much an adventure, and we certainly could feel the edges of the unknown. I flew there with whatever fit in two suitcases to begin the academic year in August 2010, and Brian followed two months later.

In a recent interview with InterVarsity Press, Lindsay advised:

Saying goodbye well is really hard. For starters, once we know where we are headed next, our heart and mind become increasingly focused on the next chapter, so our ties to our last chapter become looser. And then there is all the sadness about not seeing beloved colleagues and friends regularly and the fear of the unknowns about what will be challenges in the next chapter.<sup>7</sup>

Is it as simple as this to follow a new vision?

We both loved Alaska from the start. This job was bigger, with much more autonomy and acknowledgement of my contribution. I was paid better for less time (a 10-month schedule that allowed us to return to our families in the summer) and I was involved in planning and decision-making at the highest levels. I was encouraged to be creative and innovative rather than to conform to an old, established, living-history institution. Then I had a thought one day out of the blue: "Hey, I could have been a college president!" It was a new realization. Those thoughts of what could have been may come to many of us. Had I wanted to be? If we know that we're capable of more, is it a matter of integrity that we have a bigger vision? Should we want more prestige, money and influence? When is it time to stop and be satisfied with what we've done? When is it ever too late to keep striving for more? What is the more that will allow our visions to speak authentically, loudly and proudly?

### **A SEARCH FOR CLARITY**

I can think of one accomplishment that had a clear finish line and I was satisfied with. I ran a marathon, a distance I never been enamored of. My running club friends asked me several times over the years to train with them, but with children, job and other responsibilities, who had the time?

Yet, one year I did. At 48, I ran within a minute of exactly the time I planned to, a near-perfect, nine-minute mile average for the entire 26.2 miles. It turned out just as I planned, and to the extent one can enjoy running that far, I completely enjoyed myself. I'll never forget the feeling of completing the race, a rough last two miles wanting to sit down, pushing through the urge to stop, having given it everything, depleted, willing to lie on the ground at the finish, warmly wrapped in a blanket and just breathe, not think, not talk, not have to respond or make sense of anything. It was a similar sense to having given birth, a total depletion and job well done, basking in the glow of it.

Maybe there is a reason that many accomplished people are runners – an easier measure of knowing something is complete, the day's run, a race, timing oneself and striving for a better finish, but a clear outcome. I think of other things like that, things that I can finish and know I am done. A pile of folded laundry, fresh-smelling, put back where it belongs. Dishes whisked away to the dishwasher out of sight. I like to empty bottles or containers, wash them out and put them in the recycling bin.

There! Big sigh of satisfaction. Organized, taken care of. Unambivalent, unequivocal, clear. How can I get that experience now, know that I am finished with *that* career, put it away with a feeling of relief and accomplishment – and create something new? What will be my vision now, not just for me, but for what I will contribute, in my family, community and the world?

For most of my career, I was raising children and working full-time. I worked while I got my master's degree and my Ph.D., ran a private therapy practice on top of a full-time job for many years and then this second job leading programs for Landmark. I have no regrets. I was smart and ambitious. All I did most of my life was to take the next step without too much thought about the one after that; not so much fulfilling a vision or thinking of a finish line.

But I was insistent that I be pleased with each step I was taking, not as safe ground, but for the stimulation, a bit of risk, the growth it would provide and that I would be happy doing what I was doing. I took the new openings that were there and didn't

think overly long about them. I was never really aiming for anything in particular, just finding my way. I may have simply run out of time to be a college president, legislator, doctor or another pathway, had I started earlier or moved faster.

So is the important accomplishment of a lifetime tied to work, an identity forged in what I do in the world? If that is all that counts, who will I be now and what will I be worth in this next transition? What respect will I command without a title, an office, a schedule and the stimulation it all provides? What now might retirement be if not filled with accomplishment, with doing more, to be more and to have more? Or what kind of accomplishment will be truly satisfying now?

Is this what it's been like more traditionally for men who retired and then seemed to die or sit down in the Barcalounger and not get up, bereft of the trappings and routine of what had been their daily life for decades? A 70-ish man said to me as I shared my plans to retire, "Well, I love my job. I never plan to stop working." I replied, "Yes, I love my job, too. And now I'm going to do something else." I like to think that there are other facets to my life to be explored.

I see now that retirement is a new start line with that final finish line a long way off. I'm interested in these two new goal posts, this integrity versus despair thing that Erikson writes about. I don't want my retirement to be a replica of these past decades, always striving for the next thing and then often dismissing each as "not enough, keep moving!" I suspect that for much of my life, I simply brushed past each accomplishment and went on, searching for the next rung on the ladder, always looking forward but not simply enjoying where I was, to stop and contemplate what I valued.

It's as though these different episodes have been like Christmas morning, me with the presents and paper and ribbon strewn around the room – and then a face that's fallen as it's gone from joyfully opening each gift to the disappointment of it's done now, and I'm left with the ordinariness of the day. Or, the end-of-the-day disillusionment when the toy has been broken, puzzle pieces lost, game ended in argument or the disgruntlement of something that started out so promising and isn't as delightful as I expected it to be.

## COMING TO STILLNESS

The reader may be facing questions about what's next in life, and it seems we each have to make our own decision of what is enough, not only before retirement, but after. I want to stay physically active, be socially connected and a vital, contributing member of this global tribe. I want time with Brian that isn't consumed by illness and immobility, as my grandmother's last years were with my grandfather, her free time then spent alone. I want to have time with grandchildren and our adult children, time that I feel I haven't had enough of in the past decade, maybe ever, if I'm really honest. Also, I still want to make a difference; that hasn't altered in the least!

We all may have questions about our performance in life. I had a dream once that I was sailing, and the boat was partly underwater but still pushing through. Yet, I remembered that I packed my children away in some kind of compartment down below, and I suddenly realized that I didn't know if they were OK. I woke up, heart pounding and with a sinking feeling about my performance as a mother – always busy, the people that I loved too often an afterthought as I pushed through my days, my working life and the multiple responsibilities. Do we keep up our performance in one arena to the detriment of others?

I'm enjoying the slower mornings now, though I still rise two hours earlier most days than Brian, already at my desk by the time I hear him stir. But I've had at least one cup of tea by then before the fireplace, a soft throw tucked around my legs, writing for the creative writing group I'm now a part of or going through my e-mail or reading the morning news on my computer. My mind doesn't race anymore with what I have to squeeze into the hour before getting ready for work, the appointments don't crowd together and begin the adrenaline pickup for how to meet the demands of the day.

Sometimes, I'm still sitting by the fire when Brian comes down, and I might get up to make his coffee and kiss the top of his head to say good morning on my way by. It's companionable, and I am getting used to it. It's hard to remember now that sometimes I was already gone to my office and didn't see him until the end of the day and maybe

even quite late. Now the question is, will we ski or bike, walk the dog during daylight hours or on the lit trails at night, a beautiful and peaceful time to be out.

## CONCLUSION

This phase of my life is different, a new hinge moment. I don't have anything right in front of me, at least not in the way that I've been accustomed to. Family is the primary focus, and both Brian and I feel the pull of grandchildren, six of them, 5 years old and younger, to spend time with and love and enjoy. More time with our adult children, connecting with friends and a world of things I've now given myself space to explore.

It's a time of deepening relationship, exploration and adventure at leisure, rather than a single-minded drive to complete this thing, then the next. I've taken on some responsibilities with nonprofit boards that have missions I am committed to. I assist with Landmark, an organization whose mission I'll always be committed to.

However, there is no push from behind, no particular hurry and the only demand to produce something will come from allowing vision to speak. Like our dog, Kira, I can lift my head, look around and sniff the air, notice what is newly discoverable. I'm giving myself the freedom to be in stillness, to listen for what's next and to accomplish whatever I wish in a new model, intent that the time before this next finish line will be the most creative and fulfilling.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Bridges, W. "Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes." (Addison-Wesley: Reading, Massachusetts, 1980).
- 2 Lindsay, M. "Hinge Moments: Making the Most of Life's Transitions." p. 19. (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, Illinois, 2021).
- 3 Supra.
- 4 Supra.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Erikson, E. "Insight and responsibility." (Norton: New York, 1964).
- 7 InterVarsity Press. "A Conversation on Life's Transitions with D. Michael Lindsay." Accessed Dec. 18, 2021, [www.ivpress.com/pagescontent/a-conversation-on-lifes-transitions-with-d-michael-lindsay?source=hinge-moments](http://www.ivpress.com/pagescontent/a-conversation-on-lifes-transitions-with-d-michael-lindsay?source=hinge-moments).

# THE POWER OF A PERSONAL VISION

MARIA ZAHARIEVA

## ABSTRACT

*On Oct. 9, 1991, I wrote in my diary, "The best thing I can do for the world is to find an original way to commit suicide." I was 18. I experienced a perpetual inner suffering. I didn't know myself. I didn't like myself. I was sure nothing inside me was worthwhile. I had few friends and tried to hide my insecurities by being better than anyone else. I made being "odd" an art form. When I realized my best friend knew more about Buddhism than I did, I wanted something nasty to befall her. Not because I hated her but because my façade of being valuable because I know everything had come crashing down. I didn't know how to bring myself out of the depths of self-loathing. I saw no light at the end of the tunnel. How did I get there? Who was I thinking those suicidal thoughts? Why didn't I do it?*

## IN THE BEGINNING

I was born in Bulgaria, a macho culture governed by traditional values. For females, there was one recipe for personal happiness and success: Get married and have kids. People expected that of themselves and each other. There was no other way to be, nothing else to do and no other dream to have if you were a girl. I never considered something else until many years later.

We were poor, but, at that time in Bulgaria, everybody was; we just did not know it. I didn't know that there were rich people and rich people could be good. When people started getting rich in Bulgaria after 1989, almost none of them did that by following the law. So, in the world I grew up in, wealth and goodness did not go together.

Growing up, I heard over and over, "We can't afford that," "I wish I could buy that for you, but ..." and "There is no money for this." Overriding that money conversation, the messages drilled into me were: "Just study a lot and be a good girl. Make people like you. Do what people expect. Don't show how clever you are – men don't like that, and you will be fine." I didn't see a single person around me for whom that was true, but, hey, what did I know?

I grew up absolutely sure that I didn't deserve things. I wasn't good enough. My life was not my own. I had to sacrifice myself for others. I had to marry, probably to a man who would be too unaware to have a meaningful relationship with me and who would abuse me one way or another because he was unhappy himself.

No matter how unhappy I was, I had to stay with him until the end. I had to become a mother – if I wanted that or not was immaterial. That was the life of all the women around me, and the life the women in my family had lived for generations. After all, “that is what you do.”

Even though that scenario made no sense to me, even though everybody around me was swimming in an ocean of unhappiness and I couldn't understand why they would wish the same life for me, what other options did I have? None. Zero. Nada.

My mum told me that, as a young girl, I was sweet but who isn't when they are young? Also, I was quiet. I didn't say my first sentence until I was almost 3 years old. I just liked observing the world and didn't like wasting my time talking about nothing. Inexplicably for her, older people listened to me with respect as though “I had something noble about me.” (My ego likes that one very much.)

One of my greatest complaints against my mum was that she never played with me when I was a kid. When I did The Landmark Forum years later, being the good girl I was trained to be, I did what the course leader said we should do and called my mum. My mum was so surprised when I asked her why she didn't play with me that she didn't know what to say for a few moments.

Then she told me that when I was young, it was impossible to play with me as she had with my brothers because I seemed to prefer discussing life and all its pitfalls, so playing with me as a normal kid never crossed her mind. The delight of discovering that with her reinforced my commitment to my own personal development and the possibility of enriching my mum's life.

I never experienced that I possessed any value as a human being because I was what everybody else expected me to be. I believed that was the pathway to other people's acceptance. Ingrained by my family and culture to be a good girl, I didn't cause any problems. I showed no negative emotions, discontent, anger or disagreement.

For many years, I thought that I was not supposed to say what I really think, do things nobody else did or go against the muddy river of social

agreement. I sold my self-esteem and self-love for the false hope that other people would like me if I followed the rules and love me if I was who they wanted me to be.

At age 7, my parents introduced me to their closest friends saying, “This is our daughter. She is responsible and wise like a grown-up. We are very proud.” With my undeveloped brain, I decided that was the way to be and said goodbye to the child inside of me. I was going to be a grown-up from now on, the perfect child.

At school, I was the best at everything and had the highest grades in every subject. All my teachers praised me. My classmates chose me to represent them in every possible way. I helped everyone that I could and won every possible competition – from sports to make-up contests at summer camps. I did what I was supposed to do; perfectly, neatly, precisely. No fuss, demands or defiance.

When we had guests, I noticed that my sociable younger brother went from person to person begging for (and getting) tons of hugs and kisses. I did not. With my undeveloped brain, I decided that something must be wrong with me. People obviously liked and loved him much more than they liked and loved me.

I knew that I was never going to be like him, so if I was to get any love and appreciation from others, I would have to get it some other way. But I was already the best “good girl” around, what else could I do? So, I decided that I would be trustworthy, someone people could rely on. I became that with unrelenting persistence for many years. Not as a possibility. Rather, as a sentenced prisoner.

## **SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE**

With the weapons of being a good girl and being trusted by everybody around me, I entered the teenage marshes. People often say that they want to go back and be young again. I never understood that. I hated those years. I didn't understand anybody. Nobody understood me. I was still the best in all subjects, but my teachers became concerned that I was far too serious for my age. One teacher even said to my mother, “Your daughter is so serious, it's frightening.”

What she didn't know was that I didn't know any other way to be. I had an almost inappropriate wisdom for my age. Nothing else. I felt empty. I didn't dare look inside. I was sure that I would find nobody there.

My mum's attitude toward me didn't help. No matter what I did, I didn't seem good enough for her. My dad buried himself in work and didn't speak to me much for years so he was no help. I didn't understand myself or why I was so unhappy. How could that be? I was doing all the right things. Consequently, the emptiness inside me grew, and the darkness fell upon me.

Even in that state, I tried to fit in, hoping someone would like me and I would feel better. I tried the intellectuals, hippies, depressed ones, avant-gardists, I-like-Tarkovsky's-movies-that-nobody-gets-nerds and many others who didn't even have a name. I failed in all of them. It was like shouting to be noticed in a blind and deaf multitude.

I felt unseen, unvalued and unknown. I changed my looks, character and behavior hoping I would fit in and finally be liked. The changes did not make me any happier; they just reminded me that it was all pointless. I didn't stand up for what I believed and who I was. How could I? I had no idea what that was, nor who I was. Self-betrayal became almost as normal as the air I breathed.

I started thinking more and more often that there was obviously nothing worthwhile in me. Life was meaningless and living it far too painful. I would never make a difference to myself or anybody else. What was the point? There was no point. The day came when the only thing I could come up with and write in my diary was, "The best thing I can do for the world is to find an original way to commit suicide."

### **THE HOPE**

Somehow, in the middle of all that darkness, I decided to study psychology at the local university. I was hoping maybe that could help me resolve some of my problems and allow me to leave the deep, hopeless hole I was stuck in. It didn't. However, during my third year at the university, a colleague invited me to explore what was called "personal development." I didn't know what that was and I didn't think it was for me,

but I went. At that time, I was desperate. I had tried drugs. They did nothing for me. I had tried drinking. Same result.

So, I went. The seminar was called "Insight," which is not affiliated in any way with Landmark. I spent five days in a room with 70 people I didn't know. Five days of strange exercises and odd ideas. The days passed by without me noticing. I don't remember anything from that first seminar. What I remember is the last thought I had leaving the room on the fifth day. That thought was, "Maybe there is hope for me still." I was deeply moved without knowing why. I cried for days.

### **THE PATH**

So, it started – my path of healing, forgiving and creating the person I wanted to be. It was a thorny, heavy and often hopeless path for many months. I cried almost daily for six years as I started getting present to all the times I betrayed myself, did not love myself and was not on my own side. I made the daily crying a ritual and created a list of music pieces that allowed me to better presence my sorrow, pain and guilt. That way I could work with them as they were finally becoming visible. I wrote for two-and-a-half years in a "good deeds journal."

I wasn't sure that I was a good person, so I made myself write down the good deeds I was doing every day to prove to myself I wasn't that bad. It wasn't easy. In the beginning, the only things I could come up with were such simple tasks as watering the flowers and feeding my dog. At some point, I did also six months of daily forgiving.

Forgiving others was somewhat easy. But forgiving everything I had done against myself was hard and took time, a long time. Especially when I realized that I gave my power away for years and allowed other people to govern my life. I discovered that not only I wasn't a victim, but also that I lived my whole life as one.

Slowly and steadily, my life improved. I did every course that I heard of. I read every self-help book that I could find. At the time, Bulgaria was waking up to all the New Age knowledge so there were plenty. I was looking for anyone who lived as they preached. There weren't many. I chose to finally stop hiding who I was. I got a Buddhist

name, participated in the first-ever Tantra course in Bulgaria and entered the Universal White Brotherhood, a religious movement founded in Bulgaria in the early 20th century.<sup>1</sup>

Then, I met a Swedish guy and moved to Sweden in 2000. Another difficult time. I didn't know Swedish. I didn't know anybody else but my boyfriend, and I didn't know what to do with myself. One day, an English guy in my Swedish group invited me to attend what he called a special evening. He said, "I can't explain what it is about, you'll see." That sounded familiar, and being the course-junky I had become, I went.

Soon, I registered for The Landmark Forum.<sup>2</sup> With 350 participants, it was one of the biggest in Sweden. An amazing Dutch woman led it. She was small, but so fascinatingly powerful. I shared on the last day (and still remember what I wore) that I was feeling something I couldn't explain, but I knew something was shifting inside of me and I would never be the same. I was right.

Then, I took one Landmark course after another. In one, I discovered that I was telling myself a story of how the world was unfair to me and didn't treat me right. The participants were supposed to let their stories go after repeating them enough times. For the first time in my life, I was one of the last people in the room to let go. But I did! I have never seen the world that way ever again.

The Self-Expression & Leadership Program was a special one for me.<sup>3</sup> The assistants paired me for three months with people who knew English. When I shared from the stage on the last day of the program in almost perfect Swedish, it got so quiet in the room, you could hear a needle falling. Why didn't I tell anybody that I already knew Swedish? I was terrified of making mistakes. I saw that my past had stayed with me – the hope that if I was perfect (or at least appeared to be), that would hide the insecurity and doubt I still felt inside.

In the Communication courses, which I loved, I got my unanswerable question and a structure for creating my life.<sup>4</sup> My question is: "Do you like me?" and seeing that question was just a monologue in my head, not *the* truth, made my life so much easier.

Eventually, I enrolled in the Introduction Leaders Program.<sup>5</sup> At first, it was almost hellish. I had a horrible experience. Not because of the program itself, but because of me. I had built this pretense of being perfect, having-it-all-together and being always "cool" on the outside. The program was seemingly designed to flush all those things out and disintegrate that mask, piece by piece. I wasn't a fan. The center manager told me after one of the classrooms, "Get off it, Maria! You are a person who people want to listen to, even if you were addressing the United Nations. Get off it that you are small and insignificant." Easy for her to say! I couldn't absorb that listening for me. Not yet.

For me, my reality was that I *was* small and insignificant. These thoughts lived as the truth. Months went by. By the fourth weekend, I knew that program was a bad idea. I didn't belong there. I would never be able to get over my limitations. I was never going to become an introduction leader, and there was no reason to keep lying to myself that something would shift even for me. So, I started thinking about just surviving the rest of the program. It was almost done. The only good part was that I loved going to London for the course weekends, so the money didn't seem totally wasted.

At the fourth weekend of the program, something happened. I saw a glimpse of something new. I didn't know what it was, but it was undoubtedly there. I felt it in every cell of my body. It was undeniable. I arrived home from London late one night, took a few sheets of paper and started writing. I called it "My Declaration," and it was going to become my own Declaration of Independence of my past. The declaration of who I actually wanted to be in the world. Who was that person, that self? A self that wasn't coming from my past based on fears, insecurities, rackets and inauthenticities. A self that didn't have the unfulfilling, restricting conversations limiting my future.

What was my biggest vision of who I could be in the world? I kept on writing. I used the old Landmark Charter ("I am cause in the matter of my own life. I live in uncompromising integrity. I am whole and complete and I honor my word as myself."), quotations from my favorite movies

("What I do in life echoes in eternity."), lines from poems and novels that inspired me, such as: "My life is the task appointed to me and if I do not find a way, no one will," possibilities I created along the way ("I am a protector of life's magic and mystery.") and sentences I never knew were inside me ("I say 'yes' to life and others and they say 'yes' to me. I am accessible and intimate with crowds and spontaneous and free with kings."). Two whole pages of powerful affirmations, nicely ordered and inspiring beyond measure. When I was done, the sun was rising. A new dawn, a new day and a new life was on its way.

For months, I read my declaration every morning and night. Within two weeks, my experience of life was totally different. Not only was there hope, there was a clear path forward. I didn't become an introduction leader then, but I was asked to work on staff for Landmark soon after. I accepted joyfully and became one of the longest working staff members in Sweden. A year later, I took the Introduction Leaders Program again.

This time around, it was a breeze. I loved every second of it and became one of seven people in Europe to become an introduction leader by the second program weekend. Once, the program leaders asked if anyone wanted to share something inspirational. I was the only one who dared to speak from the stage to the 300 people in the room. It was a triumph and I owned it! I knew who I was, what it took to get there and there were no limits to the creation I was capable of.

From that moment on, I was hooked. I kept envisioning and recreating myself over and over again, and I keep doing that to this day.

## CONCLUSION

In time, I discovered that:

- Behind every language on this planet lies a universe. If I want to embrace that universe, I need to learn its language. Today, I know six languages, understand eight and can say hi, goodbye and thank you in 18.
- There are no limits to the life I can create wherever I am. I left my home country 22 years ago. I started from nothing and created

a fantastic, new life about 1,250 miles (2,000 kilometers) away. Today, you can drop me anywhere. I know with unshakable certainty that I would create an amazing life there.

- There is not a relationship destined to define my life. There can be many if growth and development is my goal. I haven't been married yet, but every relationship I've had has been a miraculous gift, enriching my life in ways I can't start to describe.
- Just because I believed that my mum was never happy with me, my brother was more socially successful, people didn't notice me and I wasn't fit to fit into any group, that didn't make those thoughts true. Nowadays, I enjoy miraculous, loving and supportive relationships with my whole family, multiple friends who have known me for decades and an amazing man with whom I've created a relationship based on a vision for what's possible in intimate relationships and sourced by the Fifth field, a key idea in the Partnership Explorations course that holds adults can relate to each other as responsible and empowering human beings, unrestrained by the past and any limiting conversation.<sup>6</sup>
- Just because it seemed to me that I had nothing to contribute, that didn't make that seeming true either. One proof it wasn't: I've worked on staff for Landmark, contributing to the lives of an unfathomable amount of people. I did that even when many Swedes mistakenly thought Landmark was a cult. I recall many conversations with people calling me all kinds of names and telling me I was a horrible person, lying and brainwashing people. I didn't flinch once. I knew what we were providing for people, and the lives of those who did our programs would deeply and significantly improve.

I discovered that my contributing will never end ...

I've supported countless patients and their families around death and dying.

As a transformational coach and spiritual guide, I've coached and transformed the lives of hundreds, probably thousands of people.

As a champion for Partnership Explorations in Europe for five years, I've registered almost 80 people into the course, many of whom became close friends.

I've hosted six breakout sessions at Landmark's Conference for Global Transformation and at least one inquiry session at every Developmental course I've attended.

I've traveled the world from Costa Rica to Vietnam. I've been a tour guide in Stockholm, Sweden, Tallinn, Estonia, Rome, Italy, Dublin, Ireland, London and Edinburgh in the United Kingdom.

In 2004, I produced and directed a short movie, nominated in a competition at the Stockholm Film Festival that year. I started making movies when I was 31. Most people said I was too old for that. I am happy I did not listen.

I have amazing friends all over the world.

So far, I've been successful at 16 professions. I've been a course hostess, teacher, course leader, secretary, finance manager, translator, public speaker and minister, among others.

After starting karate training at age 38, I became a brown belt by my 43rd birthday. As a girl, I dreamed about martial arts training almost giving up on that dream. The woman I became realized it.

I've done many things that nobody before me had done. I was the first Bulgarian ever to attend Insight IV, a professional development seminar, in Santa Monica, California.<sup>7</sup> I participated in 1998 after being told for a year, "Nobody has done that, who do you think you are [and] you won't do it either."

I've lived a life beyond anything the young girl I was could have dreamed or hoped for. Who I became was not a given. What I've accomplished was not going to happen by itself. Blaming the world was not going to stop on its own. What I know now is that the human spirit is unlimited and, if guided by a possibility, no matter how small, it can accomplish amazing, unpredictable, wonderful and miraculous magic. I am not only a proof of that. I am the space and the stand for it happening again and again for me, and for any other human being out there.

I know that who I am is a result of multiple visions of myself becoming reality.

I know that life is a wonderful piece of art and creation never stops.

I know that to live a life of my own design, I need only the capacity for generative language, the courage to listen powerfully and to allow my visions to speak.

So, why am I allowing myself this unashamed listing of my accomplishments?

Because the most important thing I discovered on my journey is the realization that living life only for myself, as an individual, has no meaning and no point. At least no meaning for the person I want to be in the world, and no point to the future I want to create for humanity.

What gives my life meaning is living the contribution that I am and can be. By doing that, becoming the space for everybody else around me to live the contributions that they are and can be. That would create a future for all of us and those who come after, beyond anything we are on the path of creating right now.

What I also know now is that if I can create an amazing life, anybody can do it. If I can discover, expand and live the uniqueness, inner beauty and power inside of me, so can anybody else.

The question is, what's next? For me, us and humanity? I don't know the answer. I do not need to know the answer. I am interested in the inquiry, and I know that I am the right person for it.

And so is everybody else.

I can't imagine a better ending to this than the ending of My Declaration:

I am the Prime Minister of Humanity. I am the Guardian of this Planet. I am their Hope.

I am an Inspiration. I am the Chosen one. I am the savior I've been waiting for.

I exceed all expectations. I make the world work.

This is who I am. That's what you can count on.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 White Brotherhood. Wikipedia. Accessed Jan. 3, 2022, [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal\\_White\\_Brotherhood](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_White_Brotherhood).
- 2 The Landmark Forum is the flagship course offered by Landmark and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs.
- 3 The Self-Expression & Leadership Program lasts three months and trains participants in developing a community project.
- 4 Landmark's Communications courses consist of two weekend courses that offer new distinctions in communicating effectively.
- 5 The Introduction Leaders Program is a 29-week leadership program at Landmark.
- 6 Partnership Explorations is a 10-month course offered by Landmark that explores and empowers relationships in participants' lives.

# LESSONS FROM THE HUNGER PROJECT AND HOLIDAY PROJECT

INA R. AMES

## ABSTRACT

*Mastery is a process, not a destination. After I took the est Training, I was introduced to various projects that Werner Erhard, who created the est Training, and friends developed so we could end hunger and transform the quality of life on the planet. I participated in the Hunger Project and Holiday Project, both started in the early 1980s. Both taught me lessons that I can use to create my current project for the world. The intention of this article is to allow you to apply some lessons I learned through my participation.*

## YOU CAN'T SAY THAT AND YOU CAN'T END HUNGER: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

In 2002, I was in the Power and Contribution course when I designed my promise for the world: "By 2026, a world vibrating with infinite resources."<sup>1</sup> Someone told me, "You can't say infinite resources," and I replied, "I just did."

The experience reminded me of the first Hunger Project meeting I attended in Boston in the early 1980s. We held the est Training and other courses in Hotel Bradford in downtown Boston.<sup>2</sup> New to the work of est, I was quite curious when I heard about a meeting of this group called "The Hunger Project."<sup>3</sup> I was asked if I would like to attend.

The project, founded in 1977 in the wake of a debate on world hunger triggered by the first Rome World Food Conference, called to me for many reasons. I had grown up with friends and neighbors who did not have enough to eat. I had been in friends' apartments as a child where there was no food in the fridge. I had seen hunger and was grateful to not have personally experienced it. I figured if these people in the Hunger Project were up to helping feed the hungry, I was all in.

Back then, the discourse in the world was that we could not end hunger. Conventional thinking was that it had never happened and it was not going to happen. I found myself in a ballroom full of people being told, "Yes, we can end hunger." and "You can help." I was ready. What could I do? I was told that the first step was to take a handful of postcards and ask people to sign on to the end of hunger and that we would end hunger.

I was dumbfounded. I was incredulous. Huh? I was supposed to ask my friends, family and colleagues to sign a postcard standing for the end of hunger, and strangers, too. I was supposed to go about and declare we're going to end hunger? Not just help people. Oh, no. Not me. I was not going to ask strangers to sign these postcards. It was going to be hard enough to ask people I knew. I was quite clear these people were mad. I was also clear that I didn't want to see any more children go hungry. I took a deep breath and grabbed a huge packet of postcards even though I had no idea how I would accomplish this.

I started with my dad – my favorite person on the planet and my champion. I knew he would support anything I did. I told him about the meeting and asked him if he would sign a postcard to end hunger. He paused. He looked at the postcard as if it were an alien. Finally, he looked at me and said, "I'll sign the postcard for you honey, but you and I know that will never happen."

He signed the postcard and said, "Don't ask your mom and stepdad to sign this. It won't go well." Well, I did, and he was right. However, I had my first postcard signed by my dad. Over time I had a lot of yeses and a lot of nos. My mom and stepdad were very predictably my first nos. It was like a badge of honor. I asked my colleagues at the college where I was department chair of communications but never could bring myself to ask my students until we did a public relations project about ending death from dehydration.

I shared about the Hunger Project with many friends and family members. Some signed. Some scoffed. Eventually, I kept going back to my weekly seminar with a packet of signed postcards and would take another packet. I asked my grocer and local pharmacist, and even a lady at the library. Some said "yes," and some said "no." I didn't die

from asking people to sign a postcard. If they said no, I'd reply, "Thank you for considering the end of hunger." I had begun a discourse with them that they never considered.

I learned lessons about life I didn't know that I didn't know. You can say absurd things to people, and they could respond in the positive and negative and you didn't shrink, die or become an outcast. The world was obviously very different from how I'd been taught it was.

Years later, as a participant in the Power and Contribution course, I declared, "By 2026, a world vibrating with infinite resources" and had much more confidence that the incongruous could become real if I could take a stand for it. I heard the scoffs and recognized them as lessons on what might need to happen to have my promise for the world fulfilled. I remembered teaching my public relations students that, "You sometimes have to get through the 'no's' to get to the 'yes'." Oh, guess what? That applied to real life, too.

#### PROJECT ONE: THE ENDING HUNGER BRIEFINGS AND 10 CENTS TO SAVE A LIFE

Next, I was asked to lead events the Hunger Project was calling "The Ending Hunger Briefings." They were short events where the leader (me, in this case) made a presentation that we could end hunger. We had had a lot of people sign those postcards. That was the first stage of the Hunger Project – to build what was called "mass." Since we were going against the tide of knowledge, the second stage was to educate people on the end of hunger and how we could do it.

My support person in the Hunger Project briefings was a wonderful man named Brij. We'd been in Landmark courses and seminars together. I got lots of information and a book called "Monsoon" to explain how we could end hunger. One action highlighted a saline solution called oral rehydration therapy. Many children were dying from diarrhea because their mothers had no knowledge of how to rehydrate children dying from dehydration caused by illness or unclean water. There were packets of rehydration therapy that cost 10 cents and could save their lives if we could get these packets to the children. I decided that the best place for me to make a difference

with this education was to take it to colleges and universities.

Respected in my field, I had a large network of colleagues in Massachusetts. Eventually, I led hunger briefings at my college and other colleges and universities. It took a lot of conversations to get into a college or university and I used my status. I had to let the administrators know we weren't soliciting money from the students. I told the administrators that their students didn't have to donate money to make a difference. This was the Achilles heel for most administrators. I allayed their fears. Their students could take a stand and educate their friends and families. This opened many doors. Understanding the concerns of the educators taught me to search out undistinguished concerns when talking to strangers.

I held an Ending Hunger Briefing at my college. My students came. As a department chair, I had several work-study students every semester. My work-study students wanted to know why we weren't taking action to end hunger. Here I was saying students could make a difference without a lot of money. They wanted to know what they could do.

Here I was – called on by my students in my insulated academic environment to take actions to end hunger. It occurred to me we needed to create a project. The rehydration therapy appealed to my students. So, we created a program called "10 Cents to Save a Life." The idea was that if people would donate 10 cents, they could save a life by paying for a packet of rehydration therapy to be sent to locations around the world where needed.

My students loved it. They read up on ending hunger and created conversations they could have that we can end hunger and here's one way. We put up a table outside the college cafeteria and people could donate 10 cents to save a life. What was important was not the money we raised although that didn't hurt.

We began a dialogue about what it would take to end hunger. Students were discussing this in the dorms, cafeteria and all over campus. The debate about ending hunger had now begun at my college. I am still in touch with many of my

students to this day. Most of the students who worked on the 10 cents project are still active volunteers now in areas that affect low-income children. One of my Afro-Latina graduates who came from poverty is now a Boston city councilor who makes an impact from inside the political system. Julia had come to college with a scholarship and a chip on her shoulder. She took that chip off her shoulder and now holds accountable the people who ignore hunger and poverty in our city.

So, the first two stages were: 1) to build mass and 2) to educate people to communicate their commitment for the world. The Hunger Project went on to communicate more actions to end hunger into the world. Women and men in underdeveloped countries were empowered and are still being empowered to end their own hunger and starvation through all different channels, including health collectives, microloans and the empowerment of women.

We discovered one of the best actions to end hunger was to teach mothers to read. The skill of enrollment as Landmark proposes it did and does make an important difference in bringing a promise for the world into a reality. Luckily, I learned that some basics of enrollment can come from being involved in a cause that moved me.

### **THE HOLIDAY PROJECT: PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE, LEARNING NEW LESSONS**

I'm not sure when the Holiday Project came to Boston, but I was invited to bring my public relations expertise as a professor and communications professional. I have done nonprofit public relations campaigns most of my adult life, including fundraising for the Parent-Teacher Associations of every school my children attended. When I joined the Boston Holiday Project team, the logical thing was for me to chair fundraising. I always wanted to head a social committee but inevitably ended up heading fundraising because of my experience. I went where I was needed.

The purpose of the Holiday Project when I first joined was to visit people in hospitals and nursing homes for Christmas and Hanukkah. For many people we visited during these events, we not only

were their only visitors in a year, we also were the people bringing them the only gift they received all year. I knew how to fundraise. Although I knew how to fundraise, I wasn't sure how to raise funds with no specific target audience except the people participating in est.

I went to my uncle who owned a soap business and asked him what he could give. Uncle Sid was another person who I knew would stand for me. He thought what I was doing was a little crazy with a full-time job and two young children. Nevertheless, he signed up and delivered the most amazing French-milled soap a friend's company produced. He bought these amazing soaps for us to give out. However, we had money to raise, and we had to do a lot more than having everyone on the team asking their uncles for something.

I created a meeting for potential volunteers and trained them in basic fundraising techniques such as "If you don't ask, you're saying no for them" as well as "You have to go through the 'nos' to get to the 'yes'" and "It doesn't cost anything to ask." People aren't born knowing how to fundraise any more than they're born knowing how to fly a jet plane. We held a training, and people each took an area of fundraising.

I focused on corporate fundraising and managing the managers. We only needed one big corporate gift to finance most of Boston's Holiday Project that year. I had people supporting me, but I made sure that I was the one to do the follow-up calls. We ended up getting a few small donations and one large Boston-based construction company that paid most of the bills that year. We had other small fundraisers but mostly they were aimed at informing people there was a holiday project. We were – once again – building mass.

During the next year, we started an annual national event called "The Holiday Project Halloween Ball," designed to be our annual fundraising kickoff. I had done a lot of volunteer nonprofit public relations initiatives, including when I was head of public relations at my college, but I had never done an event like a public ball.

The first thing to do was to get someone to plan the ball with me and the second thing was to find

a place that cost no money. I didn't have to find a site. I knew exactly where I wanted the ball to be held, a famous hotel in Boston known as Parker House, now the Omni Parker House. Its penthouse ballroom was the perfect place. The elevator leads into a perfect anteroom where one could register and use the coatroom.

To the right of the elevator was a small room perfect for food. To the left was the ballroom with a bar and space for dancing and some fun booths. Enhancing the experience, the ballroom offered the most beautiful views of downtown Boston. The event I envisioned was semi-formal and eventually looked exactly as I imagined.

Well, the event wasn't going to happen unless I enrolled someone. First, I had to find out who to contact. (The same thing goes for all local fundraising. Find the person or people who can give permission and ask.) I found out who the contact person was at the Parker House. I wrote her and explained the event. A week later, I called and spoke to her assistant and asked if the manager had decided. The event was in less than two months. She said that she didn't know but she would talk to her boss.

A couple of weeks later I called again. She asked me to explain the Holiday Project to her. I explained it as if I were enrolling her to participate. She thanked me, took my phone number and said she would talk to her boss. I told her that either a yes or no was fine, but I had to have an answer or move on to find another site. She called me back in 10 minutes and reported, "She said yes. You can have the ballroom for your Holiday Project ball." I think she was more excited than I was. She had enrolled her boss in donating the ballroom for us.

I had enrolled the assistant as a person, not a means to the end and she enrolled her boss. She sounded so powerful and proud when she called me. Somehow, I had enrolled her in being in her own power. Remember this was the early 1980s. One of the fundraising committee members, a woman named Meg Lynn, did an amazing job creating the ball. She had never been an event planner before. Afterward, she made a career of event planning for about 20 years.

I had a vision for the Holiday Project and specifically for the ball. National headquarters had no template for me. I had to trust my fundraising experience, academic knowledge, abilities and intuition, and mostly I had to trust and empower my volunteers. I'm one of those people whose winning formula in life was that either I must know or I must know someone who knows. Holding onto a project with a tight fist is the best way to kill it. I also learned how useful tools such as the PERT (Program Evaluation Review Technique) actually worked.

I learned how to trust myself and to choose people who would learn to do the job also. I learned never to try to talk someone into taking a position they really didn't want. It was a formula for disaster when they didn't do the job. I also learned how to manage people by having deadlines ahead of the actual deadline and managing in time increments so procrastination didn't kill the project. I learned the power of using procrastination when I was in my master's degree program.

I was in a small class of 12 graduate students within the communication master program of Emerson College. One of my classmates, MaryAnn, was always doing a million things. She was a graduate assistant (as I was), she did research and she was watching Watergate on television four hours a day. She kept inviting me to her apartment for a cup of coffee and I kept declining. I hate to admit it, but I figured that she was never home, so the apartment was going to be filthy. I finally realized that I was being ridiculous.

I could survive a cup of coffee in a house that was ill kept. The next time she invited me, I said yes. I went to her apartment and it was immaculate. It would have even passed the old "white glove" test. I admitted my previous concerns to her and MaryAnn laughed. She explained to me that she was so busy she could not procrastinate as that would have caused the house of cards to fall. The eldest of 10 children, she made a practice of cleaning up immediately after using something. We laughed, but it made me think.

One other thing MaryAnn taught me was that if you were going to procrastinate then procrastinate by doing something else you wanted to procrastinate first. The trick was to rate your procrastinations and

do the lesser evil first. You could then end up in momentum instead of procrastination.

## CREATING A PROJECT FOR THE WORLD

A few years ago, the Wisdom Course Area offered the Developmental Inquiries of the Social Commons course for free. I had no idea that I was about to start my next adventure. I took the first two courses with Tobin White, a Landmark staff member who led the course. Participants in the course were encouraged to join in calls offered during the week called Inquiries of the Social Commons. These calls were led by Wisdom graduates called "custodians." They used inquiry, not coaching, to create value for participants. In 2019, I took the training and am now a custodian.

Participants often create commitments for the world, and the calls can prompt them to be in action. That was the original goal of the Power and Contribution course. I am thrilled to be a custodian of that conversation. Our weekly calls are on such topics as public persona and contribution. All my experiences with the Hunger Project and Holiday Project created a perspective on creating and launching a project for the world. Many people do not have that knowledge and experience.

We begin our current inquiry calls by having people introduce themselves as their commitments for the world. Then we inquire into a topic during these free one-hour calls. I had never created a project for "A world vibrating with infinite resources." Last May at the Conference for Global Transformation, I was in a breakout session led by Julia Dederer and Peter Fiekowsky. I brought up that stand I am that "Every child is mine." I joke that although every child is mine, I allow their parents to raise them. I am a stand that every child in the world is loved, nurtured, fed, educated, housed, clothed and has medical care.

A former program leader, Julia Dederer, turned to me and said, "And what are you doing about it?" Since then, I have been working on incorporating "Every child is mine" with "A world vibrating with infinite resources." Although I stumbled around for a few months figuring out how to merge these commitments for the world, I recently came up with "A billion people declaring 'Every child is mine' in a world vibrating with infinite resources."

## WHAT'S NEXT?

My project has stumbled along with me but now I'm clear on the future. I'm going to create mass. I'm going to enroll people in being part of the commitment. I have visions of how that may grow. I'd like a web page where people can declare "Every child is mine" and take "x" action and fill in the blank.

The possibilities are endless. A 10-year-old can donate 10 cents of her allowance to a local food pantry every week. A teenager, whose parents don't recycle, can recycle five items a week. People without money can provide services that support other people. People with money can donate to an already existing organization that empowers people. One could discover an already existing program and join in.

A few years ago, a friend wanted to start a curriculum to support foster children who had aged out of the foster system. I volunteered and began to design a curriculum for both professional and personal growth. She discovered a group that was doing exactly what we wanted to do. We decided not to duplicate that program. Every one of the almost eight billion of us can commit to contribute in our own way.

I have been putting the cart in front of the horse and trying to start from the result without realizing there is a creative process for projects that impact the world. I'm going to start by building mass. I'm going to both build mass and find the 10% that can make the most impact in my project. We'll create goals, means and methods. We'll find whatever kind of web page will give people the ability to sign up and edit their commitment and, perhaps, join other people in their lives or strangers to communicate weekly how their declaration is going or changing.

People will undoubtedly gulp when I say one billion people is my management goal and two billion is my vision goal. I've heard them gulp when I said that we were going to end hunger, not just feed the hungry. I've heard them gulp when I said "infinite resources" out loud. Though I've already had people gulp when I said, "a billion people," others said, "Why not eight billion?"

I've learned a lot from the Hunger Project, Holiday

Project, Power and Contribution course and now the Inquiries of the Social Commons calls. My hope is that by walking through my journey, you'll begin or continue to create or grow your project for your commitment for the world. Get a bunch of people to create. Adjust, act and someday your biggest problem will be learning to "let go" as your last step in the "stages of a conversation" of your commitment for the world. I don't have all the answers but, if a formula worked, we'd have a perfect world. My commitment for the world is "Every child is mine in a world vibrating with infinite resources." I'm enjoying my adventure with fun, play and ease, and loving life most of the time. Please enjoy yours

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Impossible Promise is a term from the Power and Contribution course, a year-long course at Landmark that was retired in 2012.
- 2 The est Training was created by Werner Erhard and was a precursor to The Landmark Forum, the flagship course offered by Landmark and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs.
- 3 The Hunger Project has a global reach in rural communities across Africa, South Asia and Latin America, encompassing millions of people working to end their own hunger and poverty. Accessed Jan. 16, 2022, [www.thp.org/what-we-do/impact/](http://www.thp.org/what-we-do/impact/).

# PARTICIPATE, PROMISE, MEASURE, REPEAT: INSIGHTS FROM THE 2021 SURVEY OF PROMISES AND COMMITMENTS

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## **ABSTRACT**

*A 2021 survey of participants from the Conference for Global Transformation and other programs solicited feedback on promises for the world, measurements of their accomplishments and how the State of the World Scorecard applied to those commitments. Responses affirmed the usefulness of Scorecard measures and the recognition of intersections between various domains. Most respondents articulated commitments for the world although the way they were articulated varied widely. Analysis of survey results revealed a strong correlation between participation in Landmark programs beyond the conference and the existence*

*of a commitment for the world. The analysis itself revealed an empowering context for measurement that can transform how the future one promises occurs. We assert the act of measurement alone can lead the world to begin to respond and transform that which is being measured.*

## **THE STATE OF THE WORLD SCORECARD**

The Conference for Global Transformation started in 2001 and had originally been the fifth weekend of the Power and Contribution course, which was the third year-long course in the Wisdom series after the Wisdom Unlimited and Partnership Explorations courses. In 2006, Brian Regnier, the original source of Wisdom Course Area programs, asked a team to develop the State of the World Scorecard. Headed by Jeffrey Ford, then a professor of management, the team included Susie Fraser, Liz Marley, Andre Angelantoni, Deb Lavender and others.

The intention of the Scorecard was to identify what global areas of interest would be affected and how they would be affected if global transformation occurred. The team was charged with identifying areas being measured globally that could reflect such impacts and be viewed over time to see trends.

After reviewing a wide range of areas, such as the environment and human development, the team identified measures respected for their professional rigor. A number of measures (currently 21) were selected to create an annual Scorecard. Each year, an updated Scorecard is presented at the conference for participants to see this “State of the World” view.

The Scorecard categorizes global measures into four broad domains: environmental, economic, social and political. Since 2006, the Scorecard has continued to be refined. Over the years, some measures, the format and style have changed, reflecting the team’s work at staying current with the validity, reliability and relevance of each metric by the organizations that publish them.

### **PROMISES AND COMMITMENTS**

In the fifth weekend of the now retired Power and Contribution course, participants attended what was the original conference. Most participants developed “impossible promises” for the world in their arena of commitment and contribution. Once the Power and Contribution course was no longer offered, course leaders also retired the phrase “impossible promise” and began referring to participants’ commitments for the world. The conference showcases people’s promises or commitments for the world through keynote presentations, workshops, posters and journal articles. Each year, some conference attendees report on their progress toward fulfilling these promises or commitments.

### **THE GENESIS OF THE SURVEY**

In 2020, the team started an inquiry into the possible ways the Scorecard could better serve conference participants. The founding purpose of the Scorecard was to track measures that might be expected to change if global transformation occurred. What feedback and ideas did conference

participants have about the Scorecard?

In addition, the team sought to understand if the Scorecard is, or could be, useful for participants with promises and commitments for the world. Do conference attendees actually have promises or commitments for the world? If so, are they using measures? How are their measures related to the Scorecard measures? Is the Scorecard useful to these people with their particular commitments?

The team received permission from Landmark to conduct a survey to gather information in response to these questions. The feedback from the survey was intended to lead to Scorecard improvements to better reflect the State of the World with respect to global transformation and to better meet the needs and desires of participants who are at work on their commitments for the world.

This journal article reports on the survey results and insights gained from its analysis.

### **ABOUT THE SURVEY**

The current Scorecard team of about 12 graduates is accountable for the State of the World Scorecard presented at the conference. In January 2021, this group created and conducted an e-mail survey of conference attendees, and past and current participants from Wisdom Course Area courses, including Creation of Freedom, Power and Contribution and the Inquiry Explorations Program. The survey aimed to gather information on:

- Feedback about the State of the World Scorecard and the measures included in it;
- The number of Wisdom Course Area participants who have promises or commitments for the world;
- How those promises and commitments are articulated and in which domain they fall;
- The number of people using measures to quantify accomplishment of their commitments; and
- The measures these people use.

The specific survey questions used to gather this information are shown in Table 1. The

#	SURVEY QUESTIONS
1	In which programs have you participated (CGT, Power and Contribution, Creation of Freedom, Inquiry Explorations) and how many times have you attended CGT?
2	Do you have a promise or commitment for the world? If so, please state it.
3	Have you identified measures you use or could use to gauge progress on your promise or commitment? If so, please list them.
4	To what extent do you find the domains of the current Scorecard useful? [Economic, Social, Environmental, Political] × [Very Useful, Somewhat, Slightly, Not at All]
5	Are any of the Scorecard measures relevant to your promise or commitment? If so, which measures are relevant?
6	Do you use the Scorecard outside of the Conference? If so, please describe how you use it.
7	Do you have any feedback or suggestions for improving the relevance or impact of the State of the World Scorecard, including other measures that should be incorporated?

Table 1: Survey Questions

outcome intended from use of the feedback from the survey is to explore modifications and upgrades to the Scorecard so it more effectively communicates the state of the world and more completely reflects measures of progress on the promises and commitments of people who have commitments for the world.

The results were aggregated, analyzed and used in a workshop at the 2021 conference and form the basis for the data cited in this article. The team intends to repeat the survey periodically to continue to improve the effectiveness and impact of the Scorecard.

#### OUR STAND ON THE POWER OF MEASUREMENT

The Scorecard had an original mission to serve the conference participants by rigorously measuring and reporting on changes that might be observed if global transformation were to occur. We are exploring how we can expand that mission to participate more directly in the work of global transformation through measurement.

Measurement can occur as a purely “in the

stands” action; keeping score for those actually “on the court.” A much more powerful context for measurement is when measurement itself is an action that causes things to shift.

Many tangible examples of this exist from the ordinary to the esoteric – from the Hawthorne effect (where performance improves simply by observing it) to gas mileage improving by simply having it measured and displayed, all the way to the “measurement problem” in quantum mechanics in which a particle doesn’t even *have* a position until it’s measured.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

At the heart of all these phenomena is interaction. To measure something, one must interact with it and interaction inescapably alters the participants. The world responds and things open up when we start to measure it.

Our approach to the Scorecard and the results of this survey are given by this stand: We can forward the action of global transformation and the promises of conference participants through rigorous measurement.

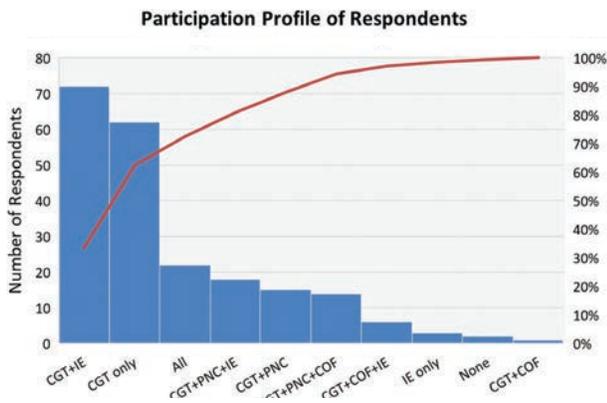


Figure 1

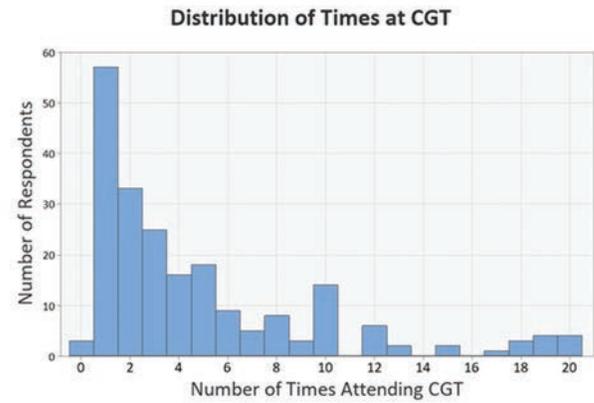


Figure 2

## OBSERVATIONS AND INFERENCES FROM THE ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESPONSES I:

### RESPONDENTS AND PROMISES

#### Who responded?

Out of 1,658 surveys distributed, 215 responses were received for a 13% return. About 98% of the respondents reported they attended the conference at least once and 29% reported they attended only the conference among the programs listed. The participation profile of the respondents is shown in Figure 1. There was a large range in the number of times respondents attended the conference, from 0 to 20 ("20" means those respondents attended every conference ever held). The mode for attendance (most frequent response) was attending only once and the median was three. The distribution of the number of times respondents attended is shown in Figure 2.<sup>4</sup>

#### Who has promises or commitments? People who participate.

Overall, about 80% of the respondents reported that they had promises or commitments for the world.<sup>5</sup> Among all the participation groups, other than those who only participated in the conference, this prevalence of promises was not significantly different and ranged from 88-100% of respondents.

For the group that participated only in the conference, less than half had promises or commitments.<sup>6</sup> This is a very significant difference.<sup>7</sup>

The inference is, *if one is serious about having their vision fulfilled, participating in a program other than just the Conference for Global Transformation, such as Inquiry Explorations, supports that vision.* The prevalence of promises and commitments among the groups is shown in Figure 3.

To account for differences in the number of times attending the conference by respondents in the conference attendees only group, an analysis was conducted to simultaneously assess the correlation of both the number of times attending the conference and whether or not the respondent participated in any of the other programs listed.<sup>8</sup> This output of this analysis is shown in Figure 4.

The conclusion of this analysis is that the relationship between having a promise or commitment for the world is **very strongly** correlated with participation in programs besides the conference and is not correlated with the number of times attending the conference.

#### How are those promises or commitments articulated? In many different ways.

The responses that identified promises and commitments were assessed qualitatively in three ways. First, they were categorized into promises and commitments based on whether or not the outcome was timebound (i.e., had a by-when date). For example, if the statement was "restore atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> to pre-industrial

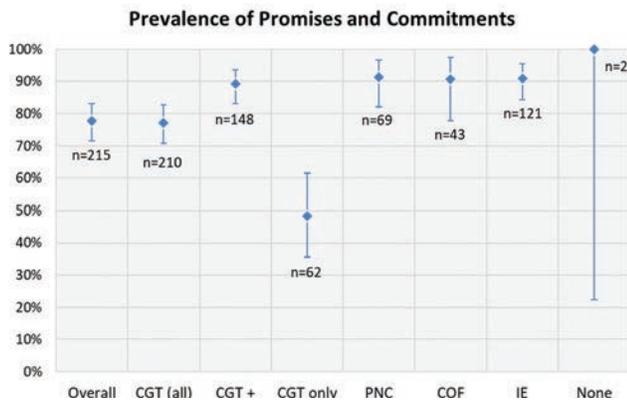


Figure 3: Error bars show 95% confidence interval for the population proportion as estimated from sample size

levels," that was classified as a commitment. If the statement was "restore atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> to pre-industrial levels by 2035," that was classified as a promise. Overall, about a quarter of the promises and commitments were articulated as timebound and, therefore, classified as promises.<sup>9</sup> There were no significant differences in the proportions of promises versus commitments among all the groups.<sup>10</sup>

We categorized the articulation of promises and commitments in two other areas. These additional categories were specificity and measurability. It is important to note that specific, measurable promises are not "better" than commitments that are not specific and measurable. They are just different ways for participants to articulate their commitments.

Nevertheless, from a measurement (and, therefore, Scorecard) perspective there is little or no access to support or empower promises and commitments that are not specific and measurable. These assessments were challenging given the wide range of domains and descriptions contained in the responses. Each promise or commitment was assigned to one of three groups (no-partly-yes) for each of the attributes of specific, measurable or timebound. The basic rubric was:

### Specific

No = general statements about internal states (e.g., everyone knows they are loved); personal (e.g., I will be or get something).

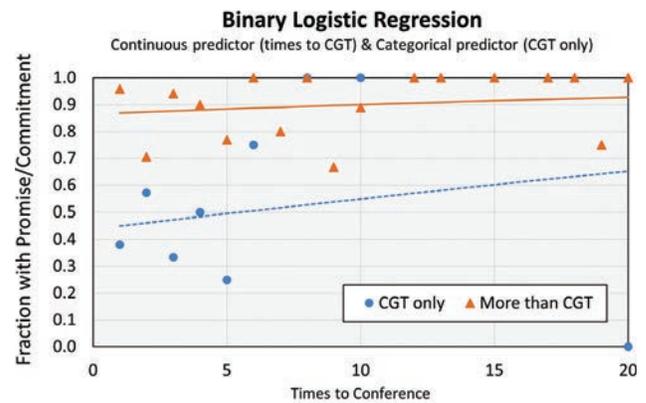


Figure 4: The blue circles are observations for participants who only participated in CGT; the orange triangles are observations for participants who participated in any other program in addition to CGT. The dashed blue and solid orange lines are the best-fit logistic regression through these data. The slope of the lines isn't significantly different than zero meaning the number of times to the conference is not a significant factor in the likelihood of having a promise or commitment. The significant vertical offset between the solid and dashed lines means participating in other programs is a significant factor.

Partial = general statements with some specifics (e.g., sustain the earth); list of many diverse attributes (e.g., peace, love, beauty, art).

Yes = some specific outcome observable by others (e.g., restore the climate, eliminate domestic violence, end poverty, improve health).

### Measurable

No = personal internal states (e.g., knowing, feeling, being present to).

Partial = points to some outcomes that could be measurable if better-defined (e.g., humanity is thriving, communities embrace their diversity).

Yes = states outcomes that are conceivably measurable (e.g., every person has the opportunity to connect with nature; extinction of species returns to the natural level, atmospheric [CO<sub>2</sub>] < 300 ppm).

### Timebound

No = no time articulated.

Partial = uncertain time articulated (e.g., within my lifetime).

Yes = specific time articulated (usually a year).

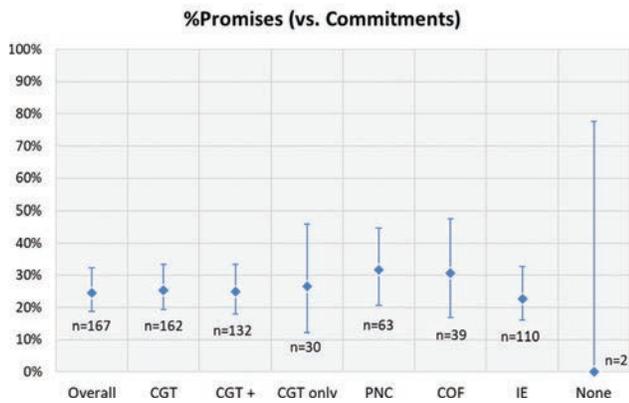


Figure 5: Error bars show 95% confidence interval for the population proportion as estimated from sample size

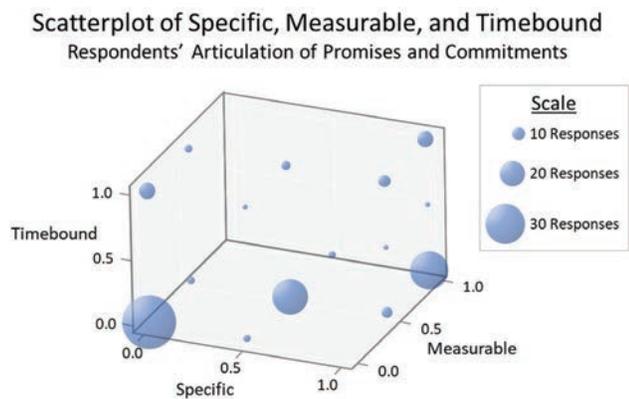


Figure 6

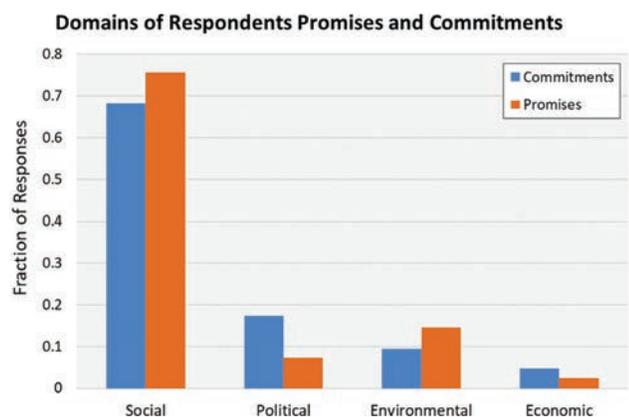


Figure 7

There is overlap in the attributes of specific and measurable (specificity is generally a prerequisite to measurability) and, as a result, those assessments are correlated; there was no correlation between timebound and the other attributes.<sup>11</sup>

The distribution of the assessment of the promises and commitments is shown in Figure 6 for all three dimensions; the size of the circle is scaled to the number of responses assessed at that point. The largest single category was neither specific, nor measurable nor timebound (i.e., "No," "No," "No") with 46 responses. The second largest category was ("Yes," "Yes," "No") representing specific, measurable commitments that weren't timebound.

### In what areas are people's promises and commitments? Many areas, but mostly social.

The promises and commitments that respondents articulated were assigned to one of four domains – Economic, Social, Environmental or Political. The general rubric for these assignments was:

Economic – poverty, wealth equity, prosperity.

Social – health, well-being, relationships, community, personal actualization, homicide, suicide, hate, religion.

Environmental – climate change, pollution, nature preservation, biodiversity, ocean health, clean water.

Political – freedom, rights, peace, justice, racial equity.

A little more than two-thirds of the respondents' commitments and promises are in the social domain.<sup>12</sup> Political and environmental were next for around an eighth of the respondents.<sup>13</sup> Fewer than one in 20 responses was in the economic domain.<sup>14</sup> These trends were similar across all participant groups for both promises and commitments. The distribution of promises and commitments across the domains is shown in Figure 7.

### Are people with promises and commitments measuring? Most promises and commitments are being measured, mostly with social measures.

Around 70% of the respondents with a promise or commitment reported they have identified at least one measure.<sup>15</sup> Of the measures reported, about 60% were in the social domain.<sup>16</sup> The identification

of measures and their domains are shown in Figure 8.

## OBSERVATIONS AND INFERENCES FROM THE ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESPONSES II:

### STATE OF THE WORLD SCORECARD

**Do people find the Scorecard useful?  
Somewhat to very useful, across all domains.**

While a significant majority of respondents' promises were in the social domain, all the domains of the Scorecard were reported as useful.<sup>17</sup> Responses for each domain are shown in Figure 9. We interpret this as a recognition by many respondents of the intersections between promises and domains.

Although one's promise may be in the social domain, progress in economic and political domains may be critical to its realization. Similarly, intersections exist across all the domains in which developments in one area can affect other areas positively or negatively. Creating a future in which the world works for everyone will require breaking out of these historic tradeoffs. Thus, ***intersection points between domains may be where the most important work is done and where transformation is most called for.***

**Do people use the Scorecard outside of the conference? Not very much.**

Only about one in six of the respondents use the Scorecard outside the conference. Various uses cited are shown in Figure 10. As will be pointed out in the Suggestions and Feedback section, respondents offered ideas to make the Scorecard more useful beyond the conference.<sup>18</sup>

**What suggestions do people have for the Scorecard? A lot.**

Respondents offered several dozen suggestions which the team grouped into categories. There were several themes evident in the suggestions, and we have developed plans to act on several. In particular, many of the suggestions in the "Activities" group are being addressed by current plans. The Scorecard team hosts a series of guest-hosted inquiries of the Social Commons that will explain the Scorecard and its measure to the Wisdom graduates outside of the conference.

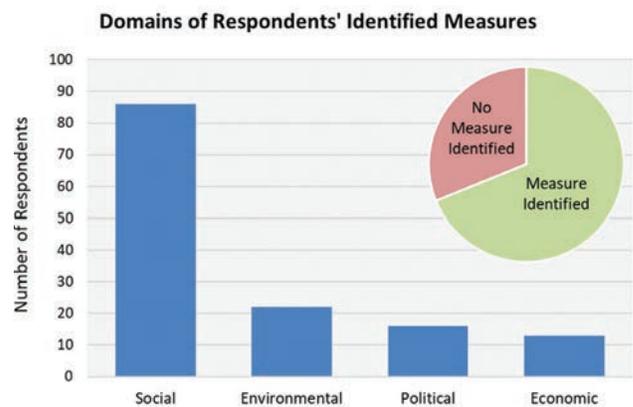


Figure 8

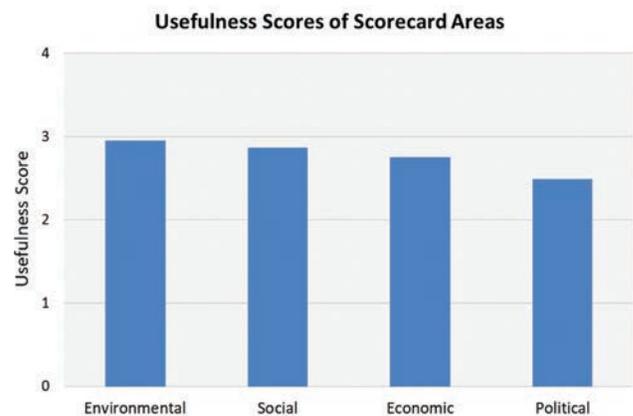


Figure 9

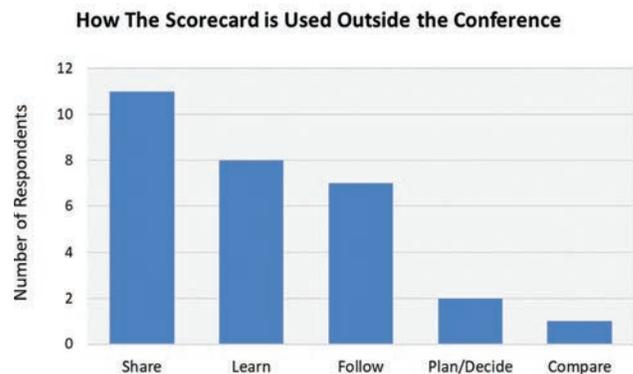


Figure 10

MEASURE	Ec	So	En	Po	G	Exist?
Equity/Racial Equity (3)	√	√		√		√
U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (3)					√	√
Biodiversity/Extinction (2)			√			√
Education/Educational Attainment (2)		√				√
Longevity (2)		√				√
Ocean Health (Halpern) (2)			√			√
% Population using Internet	√	√				√
Access to Water		√				√
Educational Attainment		√				√
Fishing Index (Minderoo Foundation)			√			√
Freedom				√		√
Homicides		√				√
Human Rights					√	√
Literacy & Numeracy		√				√
Marine Habitat Loss			√			√
Peace				√		√
Peace of Mind		√				√
Pollution			√			√
Rates of Violence		√		√		√
Religious Freedom				√		√
Renewable Energy Generation			√			√
Terrorist Incidents				√		√
Use of Plastic			√			√
Waste Going to Landfill			√			√

Table 2: Measures already included in the Scorecard either directly or as components of indices. Note “G” means a general group of multiple measures.

Additionally, we will conduct another workshop on the Scorecard and its measures at the 2022 conference.

Some suggestions involved sharing the Scorecard more broadly outside the conference. To address that suggestion, we introduced the Scorecard (and the conference) to the United Nations Association of Southern California and have been invited to present the background and content of the Scorecard at one of their monthly meetings.

The Activities suggestions are shown in Figure 11. For the suggestions about the Scorecard itself, they can be summarized by improving visualization, accessibility and interaction with the Scorecard. Each year, the team looks at how to improve the content and visualization of the Scorecard measures and we will continue to do so in 2022.

Additionally, this year the team has been exploring how to make the Scorecard available online although that is a significant task and is still in the formulation stage. Suggestions for improving the Scorecard are shown in Figure 12.

**What additional measures would people like to see? Very many, of which almost half are already components of the Scorecard.**

Respondents offered 76 suggestions for new measures. Of those, a little under half are already components of the measures in the current Scorecard. It is clear we have not done a good job communicating all the measures that comprise the Scorecard and the components of some of the indices therein.

During the inquiry calls hosted by the Scorecard team, we are illuminating several of the Scorecard measures and their components as part of the inquiry into Measures. Table 2 shows the suggested measures that are already part of the Scorecard.

A common suggestion was to adopt the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. There is significant overlap between those goals and the Scorecard measures as shown in Table 3. As global transformation is realized, so should many or all of the sustainable development goals.

We will continue to examine these goals as a source of potential new measures to the extent

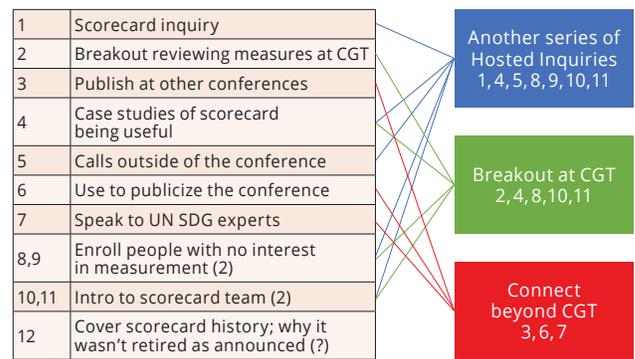


Figure 11: Suggestions for activities to improve the relevance and understanding of the Scorecard

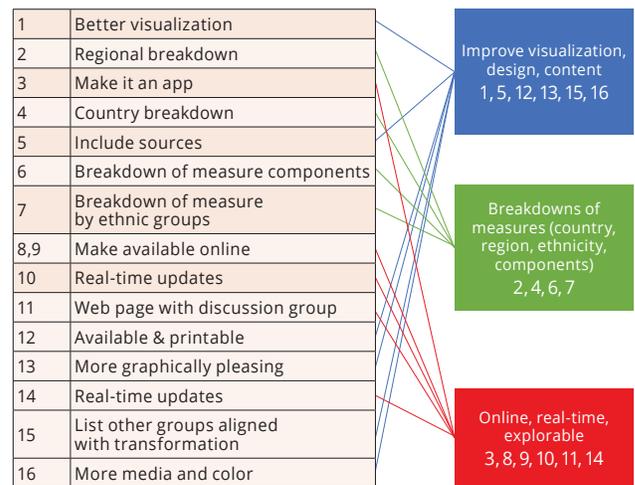


Figure 12: Categorized suggestions for improvements in the Scorecard

Measure	Ec	So	En	Po	G	Measure	Ec	So	En	Po	G
Equity/Racial Equity (3)	✓	✓		✓		Land loss to sea level rise				✓	
Suicides (3)		✓				Literacy & numeracy		✓			
Equality of income/wealth (2)	✓					Marine habitat loss			✓		
Health/Well-Being (2)		✓				Mass shootings		✓			
Longevity (2)		✓				Mental health		✓			
% of population by pop density		✓				Murder of BIPOC trans people		✓			
Abortion rights				✓		Music participation		✓			
Access to water		✓				Ocean health (Halpern)			✓		
Addiction		✓				People displaced by climate change			✓		
Anti-depressant use		✓				Religious Freedom		✓			✓
Better poverty measures	✓					Remove GDP		✓			
Doomsday clock				✓		Responsible consumption			✓		
E-commerce % economy	✓					Terrorist incidents				✓	
Fishing Index (minderoo foundation)			✓			Vitality of the Arts		✓			
Hate crimes		✓				World population		✓			
Health inequities		✓		✓							
Homicides		✓									
Impact of natural disasters	✓	✓		✓							
Innovation		✓									
International development		✓		✓							

Categories of Suggested Measures

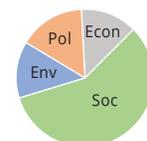


Figure 13: Suggested measures that may be possible to add and their categories

we can find sources and metrics that meet the Scorecard criteria – a quantified global outcome we’d expect to see if global transformation occurred that is measured credibly, consistently and over a substantial period of time.

Six of the suggestions would be a change in scope for the Scorecard – measuring something episodic, such as the coronavirus pandemic, or something local or personal. Seven of the suggestions seem very unlikely – hard to measure, let alone find a source that has been consistently and quantitatively measuring it. Examples are “appreciation of wonder” and “empathy.” These are wonderful things that may accompany global transformation but are too challenging to measure.

There were 31 suggestions that could be possible. These are items that seem fundamentally measurable but for which it may be unknown if there is a credible source that has been measuring it consistently. These possible measures are shown in Figure 13, along with their distributions among the domains. As the team produces the Scorecard this year, we will explore if inclusion of any of these is feasible and consistent with the Scorecard criteria.

### Limitations of the Study

The response rate of 13% was below average for this type of survey.<sup>19</sup> However, it is not clear how many survey requests were successfully delivered as some members of the Scorecard team did not receive them. The size of the response is sufficient to estimate proportions in the population to within 5-10%, assuming there was no bias in the sample.

There are at least two potential sources of bias. First, those with promises or commitments could be more likely to respond. This would tend to overestimate the fraction of the surveyed population with promises or commitments for the world.

Secondly, those most interested in measures or tracking progress on global transformation may be most likely to respond. This may tend to overestimate the fraction of the surveyed population with identified measures or those who are familiar with the State of the World Scorecard and find it useful.

An additional limitation is imposed by the analysis itself. Many responses, such as the articulation of promises, are individual expressions of visions of a future that are imprecisely categorized for analysis. Although useful and necessary, categorization inevitably loses important distinctions present in the response.<sup>20</sup>

U.N. SDG*	Scorecard
No Poverty	●
Zero Hunger	○
Good Health & Well Being	◐
Quality Education	◐
Gender Equality	●
Clean Water & Sanitation	◐
Affordable & Clean Energy	●
Decent Work and Economic Growth	◐
Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure	○
Reduced Inequalities	◐
Sustainable Cities & Communities	○
Responsible Consumption & Production	◐
Climate Action	●
Life Below Water	◐
Life on Land	◐
Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions	●
Partnerships for the Goals	○

\* Sustainable Development Goal

●	Scorecard metric
◐	Component/partial
○	Not measured

Table 3

## CONCLUSIONS

### What can the Scorecard Team discover from the survey results? Participate, Promise, Measure.

Participate – be in conversation with conference participants, understand their promises and how they can be supported by developments in the Scorecard and how it's presented. Share the Scorecard outside the conference.

Promise – In addition to our promise to deliver an updated Scorecard in time for every conference, clearly articulate what else we will develop for the conference and by when.

Measure – continue to inquire into how to measure the world more effectively and ongoingly solicit specific feedback from conference attendees on what else we could take on to support them. Inquire into the prevalence, rigor and measurement of the promises of this group and report those measures back – allowing their visions to speak.

### What can participants discover from the survey results? Participate, Promise, Measure.

The strongest statistical result observed in the survey was the relationship between participation **and** having a promise for the world. People who attend the conference and participate in various Landmark courses are far more likely to have a promise or commitment, measures and to be in action. Participation in Landmark programs calls on one to speak one's promise, keeps it in existence in the network of conversations and supports effective action.

By making a promise, one speaks the difference one chooses to make with their life in a specific way that is measurable and timebound. By identifying measures – ideally an outcome – and measuring it, the world will begin to respond to the act of measurement alone.

**Acknowledgments:** This article is the result of the work of the entire Scorecard team over the last year which includes the authors and Khushnuma Cooper, Dave Forrest, Tony Graddon, Rose Grant, Peg Miller, Lauren Minis, Joe Ousby and Susan Weitz.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Mayo, E. "The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization." 2. Vol. 3. (MacMillan: New York, 1993).
- 2 Barth, M. and Boriboonsomsin, K. (2015). "Next Generation Environmentally-Friendly Driving Feedback Systems Research and Development." Final Technical Report. Federal Grant DE-EE0005448.
- 3 Aspect, A. (1999). "Bell's Inequality Test: More Ideal Than Ever." *Nature*. 398 (6724), pp. 189-90.
- 4 No standard distribution was found that represented the data sufficiently well. The best fit was a three-parameter lognormal distribution; however, the Anderson-Darling statistic of 4.2 is significantly above the critical value so the distribution is treated empirically.
- 5 Throughout the paper, the percentages that may refer to population estimates will be cited as approximate numbers for simplicity. These are estimates of population proportions based on samples and are, therefore, uncertain. In this example, 78% of the respondents reported having promises or commitments. Based on the sample size, it can be estimated that there is a 95% likelihood the actual population proportion is between 72% and 84% (or 78±6%). Confidence intervals are estimated by the Clopper-Pearson "exact" binomial method and assume an unbiased sample. In order to be rigorous but not clutter the text of the article, these ranges appear in the endnotes.
- 6 48±13%.
- 7 Analysis with Fisher's exact test for two proportions comparing respondents who attended CGT only (30 of 62 have promises/commitments) vs. all others (137 of 153) gives  $p < 0.001$ .
- 8 Binary logistic regression of reporting a promise/commitment against both the pseudo-continuous predictor of "times attending CGT" and the binomial predictor of "CGT only" gives  $p = 0.49$  for the relationship with "times attending" (no statistical significance) and  $p < 0.001$  for the relationship with "CGT only" (strong statistical significance).
- 9 2 5±7%.
- 10 The proportion of promises in each subgroup was compared to the overall proportion with Fisher's exact test and all tests resulted in  $p \geq 0.31$ .
- 11 Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) between Specific and Measurable was 0.87 ( $p < 0.001$ ); between Timebound and the other variables  $r < 0.08$  and  $p \geq 0.32$ .
- 12 70±7%.
- 13 Political 14±5% and Environmental 11+6/-4%.
- 14 4+4/-2%.
- 15 69±7%.
- 16 63±8%.
- 17 Usefulness scores are the weighted average (Not at all = 0, Slightly = 1, Somewhat = 2, Very Useful = 4) of the responses for each domain.
- 18 15±5%.
- 19 Shih, T.H. and Fan, X. (2009). "Comparing Response Rates in E-mail and Paper Surveys: A Meta-analysis." *Educational Research Review*, 4, (1) (2009), pp. 26-40.
- 20 De Langhe, B. and Fernbach, P. (2019). "The Dangers of Categorical Thinking." *Harvard Business Review*. Sept/Oct 2019. Vol. 97, Issue 5. pp. 80-91.

# SHAZAM! ALLOWING BIPOLAR VISION TO SPEAK

FELICIA NAGAMATSU

## ABSTRACT

*Unleashing creative human genius is within our grasp. A mindset and method are available that promote genius. Why does this matter? Our world needs creative geniuses to solve urgent global problems. Ninety-eight percent of children tested have genius creativity. In adults, it drops to 2%. What happens? A “Normal Intelligence” approach crushes divergent creative genius. What if there’s a better way? Let’s explore a possible future called full-spectrum human intelligence.*

## THE BUNNY DUCK

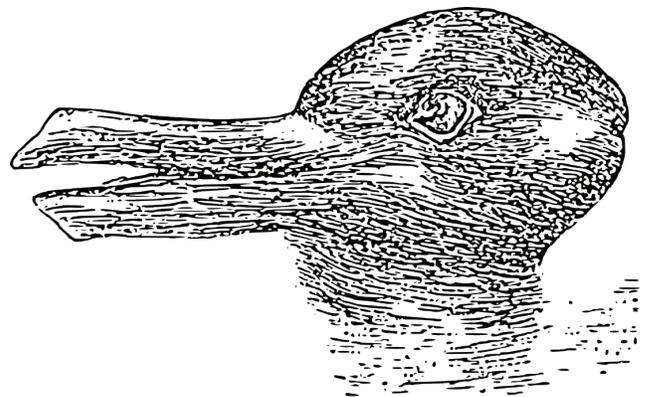
Look at the ambiguous line drawing (Fig. 1) depicting an imaginary creature, first published in 1892. Is it a duck? Is it a bunny? Yes, and yes. In the blink of an eye, you can see two different animals. People tend to see one or the other first. Creative people are more likely to see both animals, see them more quickly and can toggle back and forth between the two perspectives.<sup>1</sup>

How does this apply to global transformation? As with the duck-bunny drawing, we can view human intelligence from different perspectives or models. From each model, we will see a different animal with entirely different problems, solutions and futures.

Let’s look at two different models that I’ll call Normal Intelligence and Full-spectrum Intelligence.

## TWO MODELS

Normal Intelligence is our current model of viewing human intelligence. In this model, we define majority thinking as correct. Humans are educated and conditioned to fit a majority norm.



(Fig. 1)

Creativity drops drastically with age. In a National Aeronautics and Space Administration creativity test, 98% of children ages 3-5 years tested at genius creativity level. This level dropped to 2% of adults.<sup>2</sup>

A second model, Full-spectrum Intelligence, is a possible future. It includes types of intelligence that are currently undervalued, marginalized or shunned. Creative genius flourishes in a full-spectrum environment as a natural result.

We could call the two models Normal Intelligence vs. Full-spectrum Intelligence, or we could call them “Duck world” and “Bunny world.”

### **DUCK WORLD – A NORMAL MODEL**

In Duck world, we apply a statistical bell curve model to human thinking. We define majority thinking as normal.

#### **Duck Assumptions**

Normal thinking is correct. Divergent thinking is not normal and should be fixed. People should fit in and match the norm. Any means, including shackling, forced medication and imprisonment, are justified to make people match the norm.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Duck Perception**

In Duck world, one in four people are affected by mental illness with suicide occurring every 40 seconds.<sup>4</sup> They are victims of genetic fate, born with the wrong DNA. Too bad. So sad. *Wrong thinking* includes a variety of human perception and experience, such as dyslexia, bipolar, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), highly sensitive person (HSP), autism, Asperger’s Syndrome and others. Such people literally *can’t* be normal. They are labeled and defined as having a *disorder*.

There is a global healthcare crisis – an epidemic of suicide, anxiety, panic, insomnia, eating disorders, obesity, addictions and depression. Mental health disorders are on the rise in every country in the world, with costs doubling to \$16 trillion by 2030 and an estimated 12 billion working days lost every year.<sup>5</sup>

Even *normal* people suffer. The quality of life is poor. The pandemic is to blame or food additives, or vaccinations. Someone is to blame. People are resigned. It is hopeless. We are victims stuck in a broken system.

#### **Logical Duck Response**

Spend more, try harder and fix more and more victims of mental illness. Rivet attention on mental illness and what’s broken in the system. Add more crisis care, medicate more people, invent new drugs, arrest homeless people, build more prisons and pass more laws.

### **BUNNY WORLD – A MODEL OF FULL-SPECTRUM INTELLIGENCE**

In Bunny world, a full spectrum of human consciousness is natural and expected. A core principle is nonexclusion, meaning no one and nothing is left out.

#### **Bunny Assumptions**

Each person is born whole, complete and unique. Every person’s perception is true but partial. The more points of view that are included, the more the group reflects what is true, good and beautiful.<sup>6</sup>

Diverse intelligence is valuable. From diversity comes creativity, beauty and benefit for all. Creative thinkers create, innovate and solve complex world problems. Many types of intelligence, including cognitive, moral, interpersonal, artistic, psychological and spiritual intelligence, are valued.<sup>7</sup>

People grow and develop at different rates in many areas of intelligence. Intelligence is measured, not as a mountain peak, but as a mountain range with highs and lows. The greatest assumption of all – each human being is far more powerful and contains more potential than any circumstance, situation or condition they face.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Bunny Perception**

All is well. Diverse thinking is good. People born with a genetic inheritance of dyslexia, bipolar, ADHD, OCD, HSP, autism and Asperger’s are respected members of the community, known for their type of genius, loved despite quirky habits and acknowledged for whatever strength of character they attain.

DNA is a unique genetic combination for each human being. Some face rigorous mental and/or physical challenges. There is no shame in having challenges because people in bunny world are not trying to be normal. They are striving for a personal best life. Everyone here knows that during turbulent times, such as a pandemic, the entire population experiences added stress.

#### **Logical Bunny Response**

Since each person is unique, each is encouraged to seek out and develop their gifts. At every stage of life, clear goals exist for a healthy state of body-mind-spirit, including:

- Children are raised to love and accept themselves as whole, complete, unique and creative human beings.
- Teens are shown how to explore and map their genetic gifts and challenges, take responsibility for their PAT (Personal Anxiety Threshold) levels, choose stretch goals for healthy failure and resilience training and plan personal, proactive strategies for success.

Education shifts from outside-in teaching (instructionalism) to inside-out learning and problem-solving (constructivism), from convergent norm-based thinking to divergent creative thinking, from information to imagination and from content to skills. Students learn to apply knowledge, generate ideas, identify problems, invent solutions and create from imagination.<sup>9</sup>

The natural outcome is that all adults, including those with genetic gifts of dyslexia, bipolar, ADHD, OCD, HSP, autism, etc., are trained to contribute and recruited and highly paid for types of work specifically suited to their genius. They become valuable employees or entrepreneurs.

In Bunny world, lifelong education is a core value. Personal development courses are taught in schools. Learning adventures are embedded in media entertainment and social apps. A popular Orlando theme park is the “Unknown Unknown Discovery Zone.” Growth is measured individually. Everyone goes for their personal best record.

Stress is expected and planned for. Stress awareness and response training is a top priority in Bunny world. Children are taught from an early age how the human anxiety response works. Every bunny knows anxiety is a normal, natural warning signal and what to do about it. Motivated athletes and students opt to learn advanced techniques to leverage healthy stress for top performance.

Phone apps are developed for highly sensitive people – those who are particularly sensitive to environmental factors. These apps measure the cumulative effects of air quality, vibration, electromagnetic field waves, chemical odors and radiation. The apps also monitor blood sugar, oxygen levels, pulse rate, blood pressure, sleep

quality and more. These apps gain popularity, particularly among peak performance athletes.

In the United States, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration sets standards for stress levels at work and school. The healthcare industry now invests more money in promoting health and wellness than on illness remediation. The results are exciting. Quality of life is rising, as measured by the Gross National Happiness Index. Suicides, medication rates and stress-related illnesses are decreasing worldwide.

Preventive and proactive healthcare is covered by insurance companies and government programs. “Headstart” early intelligence screening and special needs intervention help children get on track for healthy productive lives. Insurance premiums are declining since preventive care and education cost less than crisis care, disease care and expenses associated with disabilities.

Families and individuals navigating rigorous genetic challenges receive support and acknowledgment. They feel respected and safe to reach out for help. They come to understand their experience, locate resources and build a support structure. Training in authentic sharing and listening helps families build strong relationships and enjoy life together with guts, grace and humor. Strong families care for their own. This approach takes the burden off of social systems and saves significant costs.

Since children are raised to see themselves as far more powerful than anything they face, they live with hope and humor. People embrace the social norm to keep an empowering context, honor their word and become cause in the matter of their own lives.<sup>10</sup> Victim thinking is discouraged, even considered dangerous, rather like driving while impaired.

### **SHAZAM! A POSSIBLE FUTURE**

Acceptance of full-spectrum human intelligence is closer than we think. I say it is possible in our lifetime.

Consider: In 1973, less than 50 years ago, a small number of gay activists and psychiatrists in the United States succeeded in having homosexuality removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Previously, homosexuality was classified as a psychiatric disorder and so-called cures included electroconvulsive therapy, castration and hysterectomy. Naturally, gay people tended to remain hidden. In one lifetime, we have seen the gay community come out of the closet and emerge as the LGBTQAI+ community with legal rights to equity and inclusion in society.

Similarly, removing the word *disorder* from ADD, ADHD, OCD, bipolar disorder and other genetic traits would remove the stigma and make it safe for individuals to come out of hiding and participate in the community. Out in the open, we will all get support, skills, education and behavioral training so we can discover and harness our genius abilities.

With a neutral concept of inherent genetic traits, we could improve individual self-image.

With an empowering context of full-spectrum human intelligence as genetic gifts that may be understood and harnessed for good, we could immediately enter a new realm of play, curiosity and exploration.

The possibility of Full-spectrum Intelligence as human superpowers is easy to communicate through popular books and movies already in circulation. For example, J.K. Rowling, author of Harry Potter books, established a powerful context of *wizardry* or special gifts. Harry Potter, a fictional character, had wizard genetics and did not know it. In a *muggle* world of ordinary humans, he was misunderstood and treated badly by his own relatives. Harry lacked awareness, community and training. Harry Potter became aware of his special gifts, found community at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and trained for years to master his inborn wizard genetics.

Using the Harry Potter story, people easily grasp the similarity between a wizard and someone with intelligence that is *not normal* and misunderstood. From there, it is a short leap of imagination for people to see their genetic combination as gifts that they can learn about and work to master.

Overcoming shame and stigma is crucial. Up to 70% of individuals in need of mental health support don't receive needed treatment. In many cases, social stigma is the greatest barrier to care.<sup>11</sup>

Fortunately, movies have paved the way to end shame. One popular film, "The Incredibles," the story of an American superhero family trying to fit into normal society, presents psychological concepts, such as shaming, the effects of internalized shame and the benefit to society when everyone uses their special gifts openly. In our day, movies educate children and adults about complex psychological topics, much as folk tales and myths did years ago.<sup>12</sup>

Such shared narratives have already laid the foundation for a shift to full-spectrum human intelligence. A shift can occur in one conversation. *Shazam...* It happens in a flash of awareness. This is the Duck world vs. Bunny world perception shift.

Reality-altering conversations are occurring right now wherever full-spectrum human intelligence is shared. When I speak with clients, friends and colleagues from the stage, a pulpit or in a Zoom breakout room, I see a shift occur literally in the blink of an eye. Eyes close, eyes open. A smile, a pause to process and a new possibility is born.

The Full-spectrum Intelligence model is worth promoting. It uses existing infrastructure and has a minimal additional cost. We simply speak something new into an old network of conversation. Trained therapists, teachers, organizations and existing businesses operate as before, but with a different context. The benefit is incalculable.

Given the global cost of mental illness is headed toward \$16 trillion; that is big business. Entrepreneurs and investors are already finding ways to meet the growing need for mental health. We can choose wisely how we invest our money.

We are at a crossroads. Either we will spend \$16 trillion to prop up a broken system or invest in something new. We can continue to crank out mentally ill victims scarred by shame, blame and anger, or we can call ourselves healthy diverse people in need of help to live great lives. The road we are on breeds violence and polarization. A new road leads to healthy self-acceptance. Healthy adults are creative, productive and naturally more prosperous – contributors to, instead of burdens on, society. We can all win. Private investment can serve social goals. A triple bottom line: People – Planet – Profit.<sup>13</sup>

## ALLOWING BIPOLAR VISION TO SPEAK

Why the title of this paper? Who is it that allows bipolar vision to speak? I do, and, yet, before I **can** speak, I first acknowledge an inner voice screaming “Danger! Don’t Tell.” A young voice. A child in pain and shame. I come to the present, take a breath and continue.

Many gay people are still alive who remember the “old days” when it was an act of sheer courage to come out of hiding. Today, I draw on that same courage. I speak as a bipolar person coming out of hiding. I am here to give a face and name to bipolar intelligence – just one among many types of human intelligence currently classified as disorders. It is time to rewrite our manual on psychiatric disorders. I stand for a future of diversity, equity and inclusion for all people.

## MY STORY

Let me take you back in time to St Patrick’s Day, 1987, to a doctor’s office on Park Avenue in New York City. My husband and I had flown in to meet my mother there. She had cancer. When I walked in and saw my mother, I realized she was dying. I froze. I couldn’t speak. At that time, anxiety and cycling mood swings were familiar companions. But this was throat-grIPPING panic.

We waited in the doctor’s office. Nothing happened. Finally, my husband said, “Ask for help.” I sat frozen. He said, “Go knock on the door Felicia. What would you do if it were me?” In that agonizing moment, I made a decision that changed my life forever.

I decided to become a person who could speak up, no matter what.

I forced my body to move, knocked on the door and croaked, “We need help.” Those words launched me on a 34-year journey to *fix* myself. My battle was *on*. I vowed with my whole soul that I would **not** be like my family. I would not live their life.

My family was crazy. I refused to be like them. I saw it all my life. *Crazy* came with drama, broken marriages and heartache. Of my close family, several had psychotic breaks and were hospitalized and medicated. Some were homeless at times. I called it our family curse. I was ashamed.

For 34 years, I battled heroically to stomp out the *crazy* in me. I invested well over \$100,000 and thousands of hours on courses, programs, detox, exercises, therapies, essential oils, nutritional supplements, meditation and energy work.

I certified as a coach in one program after another. Read hundreds of books. Had spiritual awakening experiences. I went to doctors, therapists and a hypnotist. I took prescribed medication for years. About 25 years ago, I found what was then called Landmark Education, an international personal and professional growth, training and development company.<sup>14</sup> I immersed myself in their courses and volunteered my time assisting.

What worked? Everything, and nothing. Everything increased my effectiveness. Nothing *cured* me. Every time I believed that I was *cured*, I crashed again. Then I took another course. Found another program. From low to high. From high to low, for 34 years.

At my lowest low, I could barely get out of bed. I would lay on the floor next to my baby son, watching him play and praying for strength to hide my pain from him. On good days, I was a brilliant speaker, teacher, coach, leader, businesswoman, vivacious, loving and living an extraordinary life.

Like a closet alcoholic, I hid myself from my son, family and friends. I put on a smile, and I *showed up*. Over time, I got stronger with less dramatic episodes. I mastered skills, became compassionate, more human and much humbler.

I never did make bipolar go away. But I stopped making bipolar wrong. I stopped making myself wrong and stopped making my family wrong.

That made space for a miracle in the form of new ideas.

*I am whole and complete. My bipolar DNA is a gift. Everyone’s DNA is a gift. We can express our gifts safely. Tell the others.*

It was as simple as that.

Like fireflies, at first, new thoughts came, fragile and flickering in the dark. That was 2016. Six years ago.

I thought it, but I couldn’t hold onto it, and I sure couldn’t tell anyone. I was ashamed.

I couldn't speak.

In November 2019, my sister died. She was a brilliant math and science teacher, dyslexic, yet holding advanced degrees, bipolar schizophrenic and a first-generation millionaire. She was all of it. At her grave, I put my hand on her coffin and vowed to use our family's bipolar experiences for good.

Passionate, but still stuck, I enrolled in the Wisdom Unlimited course and participated in the virtual 2021 Conference for Global Transformation. I learned there is a technology of social change. Also, that social change takes place in community.

So, I allow bipolar vision to speak here, knowing this community is a safe space, and it is in this community we can cause social change. We can cause a future of full-spectrum human intelligence.

## UNPACKING MY STORY

Let us consider a few elements in my story:

- Something is broken and should be fixed
- Feeling shame, *I am not normal*
- Alone, hiding
- Blaming a *defect* for everything that is wrong
- Stress and anxiety
- Dysfunctional behaviors that don't work well

In this light, it looks as though a human being, being human makes up a sad story about it.

In my story, the human being, Felicia, is sad about being bipolar, feeling shame, hiding, blaming bipolar for everything that doesn't work, feeling stress and anxiety, and having breakdowns. What if bipolar was just a sad story?

I say, I failed to *fix* bipolar disorder because bipolar is not a disorder. It is part of my genetic coding, along with curly hair and brown eyes. It is permanent. Yet, bipolar does not define me, nor does it cause my breakdowns or dysfunctional behaviors. I do. I am 100% the cause of everything in my life.

When I first realized this, the implications stunned me. Really? I did this to myself? Yes, I caused

my own anxiety and breakdown, over and over, through ignorance.

This may be a confronting idea for those whose lives and families have been torn apart by mental illness. It was confronting to me, at first, and then it was profoundly empowering. I got curious and asked questions, such as:

What about my anxiety and breakdowns? Weren't they real? *Yes. They were real.*

If I caused pain to myself and others, how did I cause it? *By ignoring body signals, exceeding my stress tolerance and by thinking and acting in dysfunctional ways.*

When I stopped blaming bipolar or anything *out there*, I was free to learn about human anxiety and stress threshold.

## STRESS THRESHOLD

Every human being has their own personal stress threshold, a tolerance level for stimuli. That threshold may be raised over time with training and motivation from within – a big enough *why*. Human beings also have varying sensitivity to stimuli such as sights, smells, sounds, foods, toxins and chemicals. Sensory input may trigger negative psychotropic reactions at far lower exposure than is currently recognized.

In my case, I routinely exceeded my personal stress threshold. Also, from a desire to fix myself, I pushed even harder. Again and again, I pushed past the point of breakdown.

Every time I crashed, I got back up and tried to fix myself. Each time, I strengthened my mind, body and raised my awareness. Unwittingly, I *was* gradually developing along multiple lines of intelligence – cognitive, emotional, spiritual, moral, interpersonal and psychological.

All was well, but I *felt* like a bipolar failure. I completely misunderstood the process.

Just as stress fatigue in airplane wings causes cracks and then the wings fall off, stress fatigue in human beings causes anxiety and then breakdown.

But unlike airplane wings, people can experience stress and come back stronger. In 1977, Ilya

Prigogine won a Nobel Prize for explaining this phenomenon.<sup>15</sup> It's what athletic champions do.

How ironic. In the interest of growth, I pushed myself beyond my stress tolerance and didn't let up until I crashed. Then I got up off the floor and did it again. Since I didn't understand the process, I felt ashamed of every breakdown. I blamed bipolar. I took it to mean *I am not ready yet*. I felt that I must *fix* bipolar disorder before I could be ready for life. Not so.

**What if we taught people** about anxiety and stress response? What if sad, bipolar Felicia had taken a Wisdom anxiety seminar? Or, read Jill Rickards paper, "Using Anxiety for Purpose," published in the 2019 Journal of the Conference for Global Transformation?<sup>16</sup> If we take this on as a community, we could alter reality and be the source of global transformation. We could end the suffering of millions.

### GLOBAL STRESS

Like me, there are millions who misunderstand anxiety. As Rickard wrote, anxiety is a normal, constructive part of life. Yet that is not common knowledge. Today, millions of people around the globe are breaking down from stress beyond their threshold. Experts are calling it mental illness and we want to fix it. That is a \$16 trillion error. Anxiety is not a mental illness.

We cannot fix mental illness, no matter how much we spend. We can't fix anxiety, depression or suicide. Nor can we fix any of the genetic experiences we call disorders. But we can learn to take care of ourselves and harness the power within us. We can accept ourselves and our situations, circumstances and conditions. We can thrive, **using** the very gifts we disowned, feared and called disorders.

No, we cannot fix the problems we see in Duck world. But, in one blink, *Shazam*, we can move from Duck world to Bunny world where solutions are found. In Bunny world, we see an empowering context that full-spectrum human beings are whole and complete, not mentally ill. Then we can hold that empowering context while living with integrity and responsibility.

To quote Landmark: *Integrity is nothing more and*

*nothing less than honoring my word and keeping an empowering context (a conversation for possibility) present for myself and my life.*<sup>17</sup>

It is one thing to choose a context, but *keeping a context present for myself and my life* is quite another thing, especially if the world says you are mentally ill when you perceive the world differently. This is where community makes a difference.

### GETTING TO A FULL-SPECTRUM INTELLIGENCE NORM: COMMUNITY

Communities hold context. The context of Normal Intelligence is already in place. Swapping out the old norm and installing a new norm of Full-spectrum Intelligence does take work. But, after the initial switch of perspective, it is not extra work to hold a different context.

Within a community, the validation of Full-spectrum Intelligence is easily passed on to children. The younger the child, the easier it is. But, young or old, a community holds the context of full-spectrum human intelligence for a person until they internalize and can hold it for themselves.

Each person in a full-spectrum community is honored and respected. When seen as gifted and powerful, a person can become that. The more coherent the community is in holding the perspective, the better this works. At home, it can be a parent, spouse or sibling. Beyond the home it may be a friend, grandparent, teacher, sports coach, church leader, librarian, classroom aide, doctor, therapist, employer or colleague. You can be that one influencer. It's not extra work. Influencers simply go about their life and career as usual.

The impact magnifies when multiple communities hold the same perspective. For example, when home, school and church communities converge by holding a context of Full-spectrum Intelligence, we tip the scale of culture to a new reality.

The tipping point occurs when a minority view of reality quickly becomes majority view. It happens in a moment, and it happens by reaching and impacting communities that can make a difference in our lifetime. Consider the tipping point is not 51%. It can take as little as 10% of the people who live inside a shared future.<sup>18</sup> This is possible. Remember the social change created by the gay

community in just 50 years. Truly, unleashing creative human genius is within our grasp.

### **ADOPT A NEW MINDSET**

May I suggest we adopt a mindset that promotes genius – knowing that each human being is infinitely powerful? Each human being can be, do and have anything. Different communities use different words to describe this power, such as God, Life or Source.

This is radical inclusion for all people everywhere with no one and nothing left out. The genius mindset also holds unconditional positive regard for all human beings.

This mindset unleashes the human superpower of love and trust. Love is the transformational power at the core of many great spiritual and religious traditions. It is the foundation principle taught by Dr. Carl Rogers, often regarded as the father of modern psychotherapy.<sup>19</sup> It is lived and taught by Dr. Hew Len, the Hawaiian father of the modern *ho'oponopono* method of healing the criminally insane and restoring harmony to broken relationships.

### **METHOD**

The method that promotes creative genius is igniting internal motivation, the power of desire. Inside each person are their inherent genetics plus their internal drive for growth. Desire sets the stage for the work needed for growth. Full-spectrum Intelligence requires training, which varies with each individual. Many people require special training in relationships or life skills, as well. No matter. We all have strengths and areas that need support to make life work well.

Training in becoming a creative genius is lifelong, but it is not drudgery. Dancers dance, mechanics tinker and geniuses learn, as self-expression, not to fix anything. There is nothing to fix. Human beings are whole and complete. We always have been.

*Resistance is Futile.*

— *the Borg Collective*<sup>20</sup>

Surrender. As the Borg Collective put it in the television series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Resistance is futile*. For a life that works, we embrace what is – especially our genetic material – and we leverage it for good. A resourceful approach is a childlike wonder, to be curious, play with friends and have fun. No matter how tough the terrain, we know that we are greater than any situation, circumstance or condition.

Yet, we openly acknowledge that successfully navigating Full-spectrum Intelligence takes rigor. When medication is needed, we take it with gratitude. Uncontrolled genetic challenges – of any kind – may be life-threatening and life-altering for an entire family. We hold deep compassion for individuals with genetic challenges and those who love them. That said, every human being faces challenges that can make life a living hell, if misunderstood.

Good news! We get to say what our life is – living hell or heaven on earth. When full-spectrum human intelligence is held as our empowering context, we can love ourselves and families, no matter what. Our relationships can thrive. We can face anything together. We can cause a rich life, full of creative genius, compassion, connection and all of it – every sorrow and joy. We move from being helpless victims to being powerful players in the game of life.

### **SUMMARY**

Let us end where we began. According to NASA, 96% of us may be child geniuses who went into hiding. Our genius is still in there under cover, waiting to be set free. A mindset and method are available that promote genius. Full-spectrum Intelligence is here now, for all who choose it.

We are the generation who can rewrite the story of mental health. We get to launch a new conversation on anxiety, stress and what it means to be whole and complete.

We are the creative geniuses who solve urgent global problems, such as mental illness. The world needs us. It is divergent creative human beings with all types of intelligence who solve global problems and create companies that build profitable solutions. As free, creative human beings, we invent technologies, create

undreamed-of futures and help billions of people.  
There are millions of us out there, creative  
geniuses just waiting to hear the good news.  
Let's tell the world.

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# HOW CORRUPTION HAS STIFLED AFRICA'S VISION AND WHAT CAN BE DONE

DANIEL KAMANGA

## ABSTRACT

*As chief executive director of the Africa Leadership Transformation Foundation, I see my organization's vision for the continent as: An Africa that works for everyone. But many factors conspire to stifle Africa's vision. This paper singles out corruption as undermining our vision. We argue that current anti-corruption efforts are insufficient to deal with corruption primarily because they are piecemeal strategies. In this paper, my foundation colleagues and I make an audacious call for creating a corruption-free Africa by redefining corruption as an out-of-integrity action and building a bedrock for integrity throughout the continent.*

## OUR INTEREST IN THE CORRUPTION CONVERSATION

It doesn't matter how anyone interprets it, our vision for Africa is a continent that works for everyone. A similar vision is embodied in the Africa Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. Specifically, it envisages "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, these visions for Africa do not speak as loudly as they should. Life is tenuous for millions of Africans. Although poverty has declined from 54% of the population in 1990 to 41% in 2015, the number of poor continues to rise as a result of a growing population. Similarly, life expectancy at birth has risen and chronic child malnutrition has declined since the mid-1990s, but Africa's health outcomes are still worse than anywhere else in the world.

Many forces conspire to stifle these bold visions. In this paper, my compatriots at the Africa Leadership Transformation Foundation and I single out corruption – among numerous other challenges – as undermining these visions from speaking, or, at least, speaking as loudly and effectively as most Africans would like them to.

First, we look at the state of corruption in Africa and various efforts to slay the corruption dragon. We acknowledge and applaud the work of organizations, such as Transparency International,

which is committed “to end corruption, promote transparency, accountability and integrity at all levels and across all sectors of society.”<sup>2</sup>

We recognize that many organizations see the link between corruption and a prosperous Africa. For example, the African Development Bank, whose objective is to spur sustainable economic development and social progress for its member countries, “views corruption, fraud and other sanctionable practices as highly inimical to the achievement of its mandate.”<sup>3</sup>

We also see that corruption undermines the vision of the people and institutions working to dismantle it. It’s like quicksand that pulls good people and good work under.

### **REDESIGNING THE CORRUPTION CONVERSATION**

Our specific interest is the design of the corruption conversation; put specifically, we examine how the context behind how corruption occurs or shows up in conversation and propose a bold new conversation. We assert that the context for the corruption conversation as currently designed or structured – albeit by default – doesn’t allow for Africa’s vision to emerge.<sup>5</sup>

This paper does not address how corruption per se undermines Africa’s future or what can be done about it. Instead, this paper inquires specifically into *how the current conversation on corruption is structured – albeit by default – as a context for fighting corruption*. We assert that the current design has resulted in merely spinning our wheels in the mud; little or no progress is being made in the fight against corruption.

For us, the current context of the corruption conversation can be summarized as follows: do more of the same, but with greater intensity. In other words, redouble current efforts through increased funding and more rigorous enforcement of the “rule of law” to secure prosecution of those found to be corrupt. The current context also calls for the enforcement of “good governance,” for example, aggressive enforcement of standards and guidelines for ethical procurement.<sup>6</sup>

The problem with the current context is that politicians have weaponized it. One administration

allows its own corrupt members to go scot-free or with a slap on the wrist while prosecuting its perceived enemies. For us, current anti-corruption efforts are insufficient to deal with corruption primarily because they are piecemeal strategies. It is as if we are *managing* corruption, not *eradicating* it.

We argue that African governments, Transparency International and other groups combating corruption should create a new context, such as “Africa thrives with integrity.” This would require redefining corruption as “out-of-integrity” behavior; this way, it would be easier to fight, minimize or even eradicate corruption. We assert that such a seemingly small change – speaking from a new context to generate a corrupt-free Africa – would shift the conversation and make a meaningful difference in improving the lives of Africans.

This assertion is based on two ideas. First, the power of trim tabs as popularized by Buckminster Fuller, an American architect, systems theorist, designer, inventor and futurist. He proposed that small changes create big results. We assert that an apparently small shift – popularizing corruption as an out-of-integrity behavior and minimizing or retiring use of the word *corruption* – could access the levers and dials that make a difference in dealing with this vice.

Second, we use the power of context as explained in The Landmark Forum: “Here we propose the view that in all human endeavors: *context is decisive*. That is, the hidden contexts from which we live determine what we see and don’t see; what we consider and fail to notice; what we are able to do and seems beyond our reach. In this view, all behavior – all ways of being and acting – are correlated to the context(s) from which we live our lives.”<sup>4</sup>

We say the new context, “Africa thrives with integrity,” gives rise to a new conversation, which redefines corruption as an “out-of-integrity” action. With this audacious idea, we argue for a moonshot goal: how might we – credibly – stand for a *corruption-free* Africa? We acknowledge this is an ambitious goal, but we shoot for it anyway.

Wiping out corruption would break the shackles of poverty for millions of Africans. With such a high payoff, we say our stand is worth the investment.

We propose that the dream of social and economic justice, human rights, peace and security for millions of people on the continent is realizable under the new framework – an Africa where its governments and people act with integrity.

How can this be realistically achieved? The first challenge is to understand what corruption really is. Corruption, by definition, is the misuse or abuse of power, funds and political and administrative positions for private gain. But, corruption, as a *concept – vis-à-vis a lived experience* – is complex.

For those who experience its effects, the pain of corruption is real. There may be no direct correlation – or causality – but corruption can mean children learning under trees because funds to build the schools were stolen. Corruption deepens the pain of communities when houses are swept away by floods and mothers cannot deliver their children safely in hospitals because resources to support a community's infrastructure have been diverted into people's pockets. In recent times, for example, so-called "COVID[-19] corruption" has manifested itself when masks meant to be distributed free to the poor are sold for a profit.

Throughout this paper, we argue that corruption and integrity are closely related. However, we define "integrity" in a different way than most people know it. We believe this redefinition will relax corruption's hold or even eliminate its power altogether. This is an ambitious assignment; we draw heavily on the transformative work of Werner Erhard, who created the est Training that eventually became The Forum and led to other Landmark courses and programs.

In this paper, we also say what's needed is a transformation, which Erhard defines "as a contextual shift in (one's) sense of who they *really* are as the *space in which the events of their life occur*, rather than as an ongoing reaction to the events of their past."

In redefining integrity, Erhard and others assert that "without integrity, nothing works." Erhard and Michael Jensen, a professor emeritus of business at Harvard University, capture the effect on integrity on performance by citing the example of Magma Copper, a company in Tucson, Arizona, which took on a project to measure the company's

integrity by measuring "promises made and kept" and "promises made and not kept." When they were acquired by BHP Billiton, they were valued at three times more than three years earlier. We assert, therefore, that we could achieve similar improvement in performance if we redefined corruption as "out-of-integrity" behavior.

## **CORRUPTION AS IT STANDS NOW**

We are under no illusion that corruption is an African phenomenon. It's pervasive all over the world. Some African scholars have even suggested that corruption was imported from the West. Some say, as an African concept, it doesn't exist.

To understand the current context and how corruption plays out in Africa, consider three examples primarily from three leading African economies: South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya.

South Africa, which earned 70/180 on the 2019 Transparency International score, suffered "extensive damage... [as the country's] economic growth [has] been hindered by infrastructural shortfalls, poor policy choice and corruption which [had] become prevalent in state-owned enterprises."<sup>5</sup>

Marianne Merten, a South African journalist, argues that "the anti-corruption strategy is in fact the most important growth path for the government to follow."<sup>6</sup> In other words, South Africa could make more money fighting corruption than doing anything else.

In 2019, the government promised to create 1.3 million jobs over the next five years, according to Kempe Ronald Hope, formerly a senior official with the United Nations and director of the Policy Division, Development Practice International in Canada. Most of these promised jobs have never materialized, meaning the government has been out-of-integrity. As a result, these out-of-integrity actions cost, Hope says, between a \$33US billion to \$65US billion loss in tax revenue. Reduced workability also led to undelivered social programs and services.

In Nigeria, tax revenues amount to 8% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Largely because of corruption, these revenues are the lowest among comparison countries. The result is lower effectiveness in governing and weak

investment, especially from foreign investors. For citizens, the out-of-integrity behavior, otherwise referred to as corruption, prevents the poor from accessing healthcare and education.

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers, “corruption in Nigeria could cost up to 37% of GDP by 2030 if it’s not dealt with immediately. This cost is equated to around \$1,000 per person in 2014 and nearly \$2,000 per person by 2030.”<sup>7</sup>

Kenya’s competitiveness is held back by high corruption levels that penetrate every sector of the economy. Frequent demands for bribes by public officials lead to increased business costs for foreign investors. According to GAN Integrity, a U.S.-based organization that provides integrated compliance management systems, “widespread tax evasion hinders Kenya’s long-term economic growth, and fraud in public procurement is rampant.”<sup>8</sup>

## HOW WE DEFINE CORRUPTION

Defining corruption is complicated by ideological complexities. It’s a laborious intellectual task because different people put different lenses on it. Sociologists, anthropologists, economists and other disciplines all have a say in what corruption is and what it is not.

However, when it comes to the effects of corruption, few, if any, differences exist. Gamuchirai Chiwunze, a policy analyst at the in Zambia, argues that corruption “distorts public policy, leading to the misallocation of resources. This [in turn] distorts market efficiencies, which affect private sector development and produce negative economic effects that hurt the poor.”<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, Kempe Ronald Hope argues:

“Corruption in Africa has reached cancerous proportions. In fact, so pervasive is this phenomenon in the region that it has been labeled the ‘AIDS of democracy,’ which is destroying the future of many societies in the region.”<sup>10</sup>

“The corruption problem in Africa reflects the more general, and now legendary, climate of unethical leadership and bad governance found throughout most of the continent,” he notes.<sup>11</sup>

In a 2019 study, Transparency International found that 44% of parents have paid unlawful fees for what

is supposed to be free education in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Madagascar, Niger and Senegal.

As we reconfigure corruption as an out-of-integrity practice, it’s important to point out that the media often distorts or obscures what corruption really is. For example, bribery or extortion are specific corrupt practices. The media will often report tribalism as cronyism and call it corrupt. But that collapses the practice and the action by using them interchangeably.

We want to emphasize that many forms of corrupt practices exist, such as bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, parochialism, patronage, influence peddling, graft and embezzlement.

Facilitating criminal enterprises is indeed a corrupt *practice*. For example, government officials, who facilitate drug trafficking, are engaging in corrupt *action*. We don’t say drug traffickers are corrupt. They are criminals. Those who facilitate their criminal enterprise – and others like money laundering and human trafficking – are themselves *corrupt*.

## MORALITY, ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

To understand corruption, we also need to define *morality, ethics and integrity*. There is a lot of confusion when it comes to these three terms. The first term – *morality* – is defined as the set of principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior.

The problem with defining morality is that “the truth or falsity of moral judgments, or their justification, is not absolute or universal.”<sup>12</sup> Moral relativism is the view that moral judgments are true or false only relative to some particular standpoint (for instance, that of a culture or a historical period) and no standpoint is uniquely privileged over all others.

There’s consensus around the definition of the second term, *ethics*. Ethics about moral principles govern a person’s behavior or an activity. When corruption is seen as unethical behavior, people recognize there’s something immoral about it. There is an evil tinge to it. It’s something bad.

Based on moral relativism, one may argue there is nothing wrong with corruption, for example, if one is being paid for connecting someone to an opportunity. Is this not a consulting fee? The

wheels begin to fall off when this opportunity involves public resources. Is it any different when it's a private sector opportunity?

When going to visit tribal leaders, several African cultures expect you to bring a gift, maybe a goat or chicken. Some tribal leaders have been known to demand expensive whiskey. Is this corruption? Where do you draw the line?

Jensen, the Harvard economist, argues that morality and ethics "are normative concepts in that they deal with matters of good or bad, right vs. wrong. Morality refers to a society's standards of right and wrong behavior for individuals and groups within that society, while ethics refers to the normative set of values that apply to all members of a group or organization. Thus, both morality and ethics relate to desirable vs. undesirable behavior."<sup>13</sup>

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, integrity is "the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles." This is expanded to "being whole, complete, unbroken, unimpaired and sound, in perfect condition."<sup>14</sup>

When the Oxford Living Dictionary states it is "the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles," it raises morality issues, making it hard to distinguish the three. Jensen concludes that "people generally get them mixed up."<sup>15</sup>

To distinguish integrity from morality and ethics, Jensen and Erhard argue that "integrity is a purely positive proposition. It has nothing to do with good vs. bad."<sup>16</sup> Jensen emphasizes that "in the Law of Gravity, there is no such thing as 'good' or 'bad'<sup>16</sup> gravity. Similar, in the Law of Integrity, integrity is neither good nor bad, it just 'is.'"

Erhard and Jensen explain that "attempting to violate the Law of Integrity generates painful consequences just as surely as attempting to violate the Law of Gravity." Put simply (and somewhat overstated) they assert, "Without integrity nothing works."

Let us now look at the anatomy of an out-of-integrity action. In this case, we look at the abuse and misuse of public resources. To understand the nexus of corruption and integrity, we assume there is an agreed use of the "power, funds and or

public/administrative positions," that is, between those in power and the people they govern. Often, the issue is not the violation of laws, per se, but the fact that the laws no longer serve the interests of the majority or those in power have found a way to subvert the law to achieve their corrupt goals.

It's no wonder that corruption results in many African economies not functioning as they should. Violating the Law of Integrity has similar consequences as does violating the Law of Gravity. The only difference is that the consequences of violating the Law of Integrity are not immediately visible. However, the pain arising out of corruption is there for all to see.

The Global Financial Integrity report estimates that from 2005 to 2014 Africa lost between \$36 billion and \$69 billion in illicit financial flows. This represents about 74% of all financing required (approximately \$93 billion per year) to develop infrastructure to service Africa's growth needs.<sup>17</sup>

South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya are examples of what is happening elsewhere in Africa. Needless to say, corruption is a global scourge. The impact of corruption is more pronounced in Africa because it undermines efforts to reduce poverty and apply resources to the internationally agreed-upon interventions as articulated in the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

While corruption has become systemic and interventions are at national and institutional levels, we must not forget that it is individuals who engage in this out-of-integrity behavior.

If the context in which they take up corrupt practices is: "Everyone else is corrupt so why should I be any different?," they may see no other way to exist. They may see no way out even if they can see the devastating impact on the citizens.

No wonder the current context of corrupt practices leaves the corrupt person resigned or at least caught in a vicious cycle of wrongdoing. The problem is that in the current African context, labeling a person as corrupt leaves them with little or no incentive to remedy their out-of-integrity behavior.

By creating a new context and redefining corruption as out-of-integrity behavior with an

emphasis on the consequences of the Law of Integrity, we assert that a successful intervention is possible. This is the trim tab referred to earlier. To expand on the hidden power of context as discussed in The Forum, consider this:

“When these contexts become apparent and known, we can begin to see the unwitting process by which they were assembled and the degree to which they govern our everyday lives. We are left, possibly, for the first time, with a choice about who we are and who we can be, separate from these contexts. There is a freedom and ability to take action that was unavailable before....”

Thus, anyone engaged in out-of-integrity *practices* may – for the first time ever – see that they have a choice to continue with what they are doing or work for the common good. Suddenly, that person could take the first step – the trim tab – which simply involves acknowledging that one is out of integrity.

We must emphasize that one should forget about being a person of integrity until any out-of-integrity is acknowledged and occurs for that person as a diminution of one's self. Put differently, corruption – as an out-of-integrity *act* – diminishes you as a person.

What does this really mean? When one sees that being out of integrity diminishes them, they may see they have an incentive and an option to stop the downhill action. In some cultures, such diminution is so clear that many public figures leave office – for fear of severe legal action and to salvage their reputation.

### ENGINEERING A BREAKTHROUGH AGAINST CORRUPTION

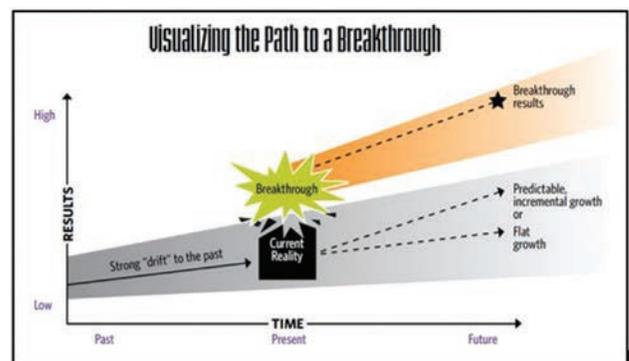
We have established that – with regard to the fight against corruption – we are stuck in the mud. To get unstuck, many African countries have tried many things, such as redesigning government processes to create competition among service providers. The paradox is that the more we spin our wheels to get out of the mud, the further our wheels burrow into the mud. Thus, these public procurement systems continue to represent an opportunity for fraudsters and corrupt officials to access state funds under the guise of legitimacy.

What we are really looking for is a breakthrough, as opposed to miniscule, incremental changes of anti-corruption efforts. The dictionary meaning of breakthrough is “a sudden, dramatic and important discovery or development” or “an instance of achieving success in a particular sphere or activity.” There is a world of difference between change and breakthrough. Change is progress or perceived improvement or marginal advancement. A *breakthrough* is a leap forward.

By redesigning the conversation about corruption, we say that we can engineer the kind of breakthrough Jon Kleinman and Jen Zimmer, both partners at the consultancy firm, Insigniam, talk about: “True breakthroughs are not just one-hit wonders. They are sustainable, meaning they deliver results without sacrificing quality, integrity or well-being.”<sup>18</sup>

Using Kleinman and Zimmer's model, the leaders and people of Africa must acknowledge that current strategies to fight corruption have been ineffective. The continent needs to identify, acknowledge and confront the corruption drift, the wind that is blowing us to an almost certain (default) future in which the vision of an Africa that works for everyone has been silenced.

Similarly, we must examine Africa's corruption drift and find ways to insert the new context and conversation into the mainstream of thought. These include the corruption ecosystem that determines mindsets, behaviors, actions and obvious effects of this pandemic.



In their illustration above, Kleinman and Zimmer clearly show the need for a breakthrough from the current reality. Building on their model, we assert

that – for Africa – this breakthrough would come about by shifting the focus from fighting corruption to one of building integrity. By viewing corruption through an out-of-integrity lens, the Law of Integrity and the consequences of out-of-integrity behavior would be at the center of anti-corruption efforts.

Redesigning the corruption conversation as an out-of-integrity behavior allows Africa to imagine the impossible and then work backward. Imagine a future Africa where integrity is pervasive. Corruption would have no place to hide. What would we have done to get there?

### **HOW THE NEW MODEL OF CORRUPTION – AS AN OUT-OF-INTEGRITY BEHAVIOR – WILL WORK**

To create a new context for corruption – as out-of-integrity behavior – we must educate people in understanding what integrity is and is not. We must support individuals, organizations and governments in developing and adopting practices that support their integrity.

To begin that journey, the question arises: What constitutes your word? Most people understand their word as **what you said**. In other words, your word is whatever you said you will do, or will not do (and in the case of do, doing it on time).

Erhard's idea of integrity as what you said includes what you said indirectly. Put another way, we're talking about unspoken agreements. This idea is critical. Perhaps, the key driver of corruption in Africa is the **unspoken agreement** that politicians invest their money to ascend into office and then repay themselves through corrupt means when they hold office.

Meanwhile, voters engage in their own unspoken agreements. Often, they aid and abet politicians' behavior because – at election time – they demand bribes and elect leaders based on tribal loyalty or those who pay them, either directly or indirectly through a community project.

These out-of-integrity behaviors are so embedded in the African way of life, any anti-corruption efforts are bound to fail unless we get to the root of the problem. In essence, voters do see the true cost of voting for leaders based on

tribal affiliations or because they, as voters, have received financial or other handouts. Unless voters and their leaders see their out-of-integrity behavior as costly and injurious to their well-being, their children's well-being and future generations, and their countries, there is little hope for change.

The second definition of your word is **what you know to do**. Integrity requires knowing what to do or knowing what not to do, and doing what you promise as you know it is meant to be done (and doing it on time), unless you have explicitly said you will not do so. Applying this idea, consider that in fighting corruption while whistle blowers have come forward, few officials, if any, have been prosecuted for their out-of-integrity behavior. Therefore, we must find ways to hold officials to account for their out-of-integrity behavior.

The third definition of your word is **what is expected of you** or unexpressed requests. For example, a teacher or headmaster is not expected to sleep with their student. That's an out-of-integrity, corrupt behavior. You may not have explicitly given that as your word, but it is what is expected of you.

Opposition parties are out of integrity if they see their role only as opposing the party in power. In our view, their voters expect them to provide checks and balances, but also to provide alternative ideas as a good corporate citizen would. Although the opposition party is not in power, it carries the aspirations and unexpressed requests of its voters and supporters. If it doesn't effectively act on their behalf, then it is out of integrity. It must, at all times, act in accordance with the word it gave its voters.

When campaigning for office, African politicians create the impression that they will solve most, if not all, the problems their constituents face. The electorate has an expectation that when elected, these politicians will resolve these challenges. Unfortunately, the politicians are often only interested in acquiring power. Problems they promised to solve are not solved, let alone solved on time. This is an out-of-integrity act not normally seen as corruption, but it is.

Your word is also **what you say is so**. Whenever

you have given your word to others, as to the existence of some thing or some state of the world, your word includes being willing to be held accountable so others can see evidence that supports your assertion and see it as valid for themselves.

Sometimes politicians – and political parties – make explicit promises, normally contained in glossy party manifestos and well-designed websites. But promising heaven and delivering hell has become accepted in most of Africa. Often, politicians are not elected on the basis of their party manifestos, but on the basis of who leads the party or the tribe they come from.

### WHAT VOTERS CAN DO

While we have focused on the out-of-integrity behavior on the part of the politicians, the voters are out of integrity, as well. They have to take responsibility for: 1) researching and ensuring they are well-informed about candidates' policy positions; 2) making responsible choices when voting; and 3) ensuring they vote and demand a free, fair and secure voting system.

Your word also constitutes *what you stand for*. Here, the organizations that run elections in Africa and say they stand for free and fair elections come into play. Their stand is for independence and not to favor any of the contesting political parties. Equally, political parties stand for nonviolent elections. Periodically, electoral commissions require these parties to sign onto and take a stand for practices that ensure democratic elections are held. Needless to say, most of these organizations go against what they say they stand for. Clearly, they don't see their out-of-integrity behavior as corruption nor do they see that such behavior diminishes them.

Finally, one's word constitutes all the written and unwritten moral, ethical and legal standards. It's impossible to capture every aspect of life in a written or unwritten contract. The way out of this dilemma is to specifically decline the moral, ethical and legal standards that will not be part of your word. For example, in a country that drives on the left, you may wish – when you apply for your driving license – to clearly state that you will not be bound to driving on the left. Or, if you want an

even funnier example, you may explicitly state that you will assume the red lights are actually green!

### CONCLUSION: INTEGRITY IS A MOUNTAIN WITH NO TOP

We assert that Africa is the birthplace of humankind, where our collective umbilical cord lies buried. We conclude by saying that if Africa works, the whole world works.

The idea of an *Africa that works for everyone* may sound utopian, but it's an idea that the Africa Leadership Transformation Foundation is willing to pursue. We assert that redesigning the corruption conversation will allow for the Foundation's and the African Union's visions to emerge. Likewise, the created futures of millions of Africans will become possible. When Africa becomes the continent that thrives on integrity, life will be workable for millions of Africans.

We recognize there will be moments when one will be out of integrity. As oft-stated in Landmark courses, integrity is a mountain with no top. To be a person of integrity requires that we recognize this and learn to enjoy the climb. While we aim to have a corrupt-free Africa (the mountaintop) we should not be bent out of shape when someone goes astray or when a company or country stumbles.

To restore integrity, we must distinguish the out-of-integrity behavior, acknowledge the impact, make up for any damage, if possible, and commit anew to valuing our integrity and holding ourselves accountable for it.

Knowing that integrity is a mountain with no top and being joyfully engaged in the climb leaves Africa with power, and leaves African companies, countries and individuals known in the world as authentic and honorable. Even knowing that we will never get there opens us up to a way to deal productively with our own out-of-integrity behavior as well as that of others.

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# CREATING A FAIR AND HONORABLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLE: WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

JOHN HEWSON

## ABSTRACT

*For me, once I see something, I can't then unsee it. Imagine every 7-year-old child taken from every home in the land for three generations. Culture, language and connection erased; families destroyed. The impact of these actions became clear to me when I witnessed these children, now elders of the local Tla'amin First Nation in Canada, return to the very place they were taken from 60 years ago. My hope in creating this paper is to raise awareness and connect with those who care for our First Nation friends.*



Tla'amin people at the dock with cedar. Photo by John Hewson.

## INTRODUCTION

In the spirit of truth and reconciliation, I ask, What can we settlers actually do?

Here on Turtle Island, otherwise known as North America, we settlers live on stolen land.<sup>1</sup> In ruling our kind, forgiving, Indigenous hosts with laws and practices they did not agree to, we've created a state-sanctioned genocide almost erasing the people, their culture and their language.<sup>2</sup>

From 1831 to 1996, the Canadian government routinely removed young children from their homes, taking 150,000 of them to residential schools far away. At least 6,000 children died while in the system. The genocide was funded by the government's Department of Indian Affairs and administered by Christian churches in order to assimilate them into the dominant Canadian culture.<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>

In 2021, the discovery of nearly 4,300 unmarked children's graves at old residential school sites across Canada brought all the injustices to the forefront. One local sign shows 7,912 graves at year's end. The number will keep rising as more discoveries are made.<sup>6</sup>



Tla'amin nation sign Every Child Matters. Photo by John Hewson.

Until recently, most Canadians knew next to nothing about the atrocities of the residential school system. The recent uncovering of so many unmarked graves has finally gained public attention.

From first contact to today, settlers have taken land and control over Indigenous people. In Canada, truth and reconciliation attempts are underway to rebuild equality and respect slowly for these people we now call First Nations collectively.

Without truth, there is no reconciliation or healing. This is a complex 500-year ordeal that may be upsetting to some. The truth can be harsh. Challenging facts make it easy to become defensive. I ask you to put your opinions and reactions aside. We are not to blame, especially if we choose to be part of the solution. As you read, please invoke compassion to understand and transform.

One key resource, "Indigenous Writes: A Guide to

First Nation, Métis & Inuit Issues in Canada," by Chelsea Vowel, is a pivotal reference throughout this paper.<sup>3</sup>

Vowel is Métis, part of the first generation to be educated entirely outside the residential schools system. A lawyer, writer, intellectual, educator, mother and guide who writes with humor, she provides answers to difficult topics in the hope of sparking further conversation.

### WALKING WITH THE TLA'AMIN PEOPLE

My awareness of First Nation issues began to arise two years ago when I attended a Reconciliation Walk to the local ship dock with the Tla'amin people. We walked through our quiet Canadian coastal town of Powell River with elders returning to the very place they were taken from as young children. Now, they are in their 60s and 70s. We all sang and beat drums as we walked.

At the dock, each residential school survivor was brushed with a cedar branch as part of the ceremony. The sacred cleansing cedar was then cast into the ocean as a symbol of healing, letting go of the pain and suffering.

Both heart-wrenching and inspiring, I saw their ability to forgive and move on. They are committed to a better world, healing through truth and reconciling. The hope is to rebuild, knowing it's a multi-generational journey and these atrocities must never happen again.

What settlers did not see when we invaded several hundred years ago was that First Nations people had lived in harmony with each other and the land for many thousands of years. Even now, they take care of the land, so the land will take care of us all. They respect each other and all living things.

In 2021, on Sept. 30, Canada held its first national holiday called National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to recognize the damage done. Again, I walked with hundreds of local Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The turnout was moving, stimulated by tragic news reports, still emerging about the discovery of so many unmarked children's graves.

What's happened here on Turtle Island is not



Walk on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.  
Photo by John Hewson.

unique. Settlers in other parts of the world, such as Australia, India, Africa and elsewhere, took land by force or decree or made treaty agreements that served them but were damaging to the Indigenous people.<sup>7</sup>

As a settler myself, I moved to Canada in 1992 from the United Kingdom for my job. I fell in love with the land camping under the star-drenched night sky in the wilderness. I developed a respect for time, space and spirit. The beauty of wild nature touched my nature and being deep inside. As an immigrant, I'm grateful to be part of a progressive multicultural nation, yet ashamed of our history and treatment of the First Nations people.

### **AWAKENING TO THE DEVASTATION**

More recently I've begun immersing myself in this tragic history. Viewing the film, "Returning Home," I learned about one residential school survivor, Phyllis Webstad, who was sent to a school at age 6.<sup>8</sup>

She tells about four generations in her family, beginning with her grandmother, her mother, herself and her son. Each was taken from their home to St. Joseph's Mission Residential School near Williams Lake, British Columbia. Consequently, none of them know how to relate to each other as parent and child.

The residential school system broke them, their community and tradition of oral culture

of storytelling, family culture and social cycle.<sup>9</sup> Phyllis' story of her orange shirt being taken away became the symbol of healing through the "Orange Shirt Day – Every Child Matters" movement. She's traveled extensively sharing her story across the land.

Today, Webstad's grandchildren are the first generation to be raised under their own roof, an attempt to be a family without the guidance of elders or their oral culture. She asks for help to heal, to protect the land, all people, and all living things and honor the residential school survivors.

In the 139 residential schools across Canada, the children were beaten, stripped, dressed uniformly, forced to speak English, punished for speaking their own language, separated from siblings, taught religion and settlers' curricula. In short, their culture was forcefully removed. Mistreated and malnourished, many of them experienced frequent abuse at the hands of nuns and priests and governors in these schools, leaving so many unhappy memories.<sup>3,5,10</sup>

In the film, Webstad's grandmother speaks of the time her children turned five. Facing the upcoming separation, she would stop holding them to prepare them and herself. A drastic action she hoped would reduce the pain of separation she knew was coming, while hoping to erase her own experience. Imagine that moment and the impact.

The legacy of the systemic destruction has been linked to an increased prevalence of post-traumatic stress, alcoholism, substance abuse and suicide, which persist within Indigenous communities today.<sup>3,5,10</sup>

In 1920, Duncan Campbell Scott, then Canada's deputy minister of Indian Affairs, made residential school attendance compulsory for Indian children aged 7 to 15. As he put it so bluntly:

"I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone ... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no



The Scream by Kent Monkman (2017) Acrylic on canvas 84" x 126". Collection of the Denver Art Museum Image courtesy of the artist.

Indian Department."<sup>11</sup>

In the 1960s, the government scooped up 11,132 Indigenous children and placed them in foster care or put them up for adoption if their family structures had broken down. This practice continues today with more Indigenous kids in care than ever before. Specifically, in the province of Manitoba, First Nation kids make up 21% of the child population, yet account for 84% of children in permanent care.<sup>12</sup>

For some Indigenous children, this was a chance for an education and safe upbringing. For most, it was another break in belonging from their culture, language and families already traumatized by the residential school system. I have a friend in Winnipeg in his 50s who is what's known as a 60s Scoop Kid Survivor. Born on a Star Nation reservation in the Thunderbird Clan, of Métis decent, he was adopted by a white Catholic family.

Well educated, he is a creative soul and educator who still struggles with being removed from his people and culture. Now, he faces regular systemic racism and not knowing where he truly belongs. With Indigenous blood pumping through his veins, he experiences every heartbeat as a reminder that many of his family are gone or fell victim to addiction, which also plagued him until he overcame it 20 years ago, in part by embracing his own people and culture. When reviewing this paper, he said, "They tried to kill me and eradicate my people. I'm still here."

Consider that on first contact the early settlers and Indigenous people were curious and friendly. Settlers worked with and learned from the native people on a more equal basis to hunt, trap and trade. They formed symbiotic alliances. Indigenous guides were essential to surviving harsh winters and uncharted territory. Moreover, in the 1600s, the European settler population was still low compared to the Indigenous population, which had worked together as self-governing nations for thousands of years.

As more European settlers immigrated, they shifted their focus to land management, treaties and ownership. Gradually, they moved Indigenous people to smaller and less valuable areas of land, which enabled settler communities to thrive.<sup>13</sup>

Vowel notes in her book that these land claims are founded in old European law, not in Indigenous law. The settlers' Doctrine of Discovery and Doctrine of Occupation, noted in papal bulls of 1452 and 1455, allowed Christians to take pagans or non-Christians as slaves in the name of expanding Christianity and permitted land that seemingly belonged to no one to be claimed by Crown and settler.<sup>13</sup>

Remember, Indigenous communities do not regard land as something anyone owns. Rather, land is something to take care of and pass on to future generations.

Thus, the 11 treaties and creation of the multitude of small reservations that followed are, at best, questionable as the law of the discovering party (settlers/immigrants) overruled Indigenous treaties, traditions and practices. Colonization tricked the welcoming host nations into giving up land. Today, Canada's Indigenous people hold rights to just 0.28% of the land in Canada while the Crown owns 99.72%.<sup>13</sup>

Going from 100% of the land's population before first contact to just 4% today, the 600 First Nations now share 2,300 small reserves, on average the size of 1.5 city blocks. This totals the size of Belgium, a small country that fits into Canada 327 times. All this in under 500 years of sovereign law! God save the queen.<sup>13</sup>

Many more injustices need to be recognized.

As an Indian, Indigenous or First Nations person, you must live on a reserve and leaving reserve can risk losing Indian status. These are humans who were once free to roam the land, who took care of Mother Earth and shared her bounty. Shockingly, many First Nation reserves still do not have access to safe fresh drinking water.<sup>14</sup>

Sadly, there's more, so please be curious and do your own research into such matters as the outlawing of vital cultural potlatch ceremonies; the smallpox epidemic that killed off so many people; addiction and mental health issues amongst First Nations; the non-derogation clause in Aboriginal law.

You can begin to see the mountain of injustice and injury piled onto many generations of peaceful people. The Indian Act lives on, as do misunderstandings, ignorance and divisions.

Progress toward healing these wounds is slow. Canadians began to come to grips with the horrors and inequities when the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established in 1991. In 1996, the commission submitted a multi-volume report addressing one overriding question: What are the foundations of a fair and honorable relationship between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of Canada? It added that there can be no peace or harmony unless there is justice.<sup>16,17</sup>

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report included 94 Calls to Actions, stating clearly in the opening paragraph of their executive summary that this was a cultural genocide.<sup>15,16,17,18</sup>

Finally, we began to see real change when the Canadian government adopted into law the United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous People on June 21, 2021. Along with the new National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we enter a more hopeful chapter to honor survivors and begin healing from this tragic chapter in Canadian history.

Vowel urges all Canadians to read the highlights of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal people's report.<sup>18</sup> This 150-page snapshot of the commission's five-year study summarizes 4,000 pages of findings and recommendations. The commission's purpose was to figure out what went wrong, how it went wrong and what can

be done to correct the problems. Many issues emerged after the commission held 178 days of public hearings, visited 96 communities and interviewed 7,000 residential school survivors. They concluded:

"The main policy direction, pursued for more than 150 years, first by colonial then by Canadian governments, has been wrong."<sup>18,19</sup>

Vowel acknowledges this was legal, this was acceptable, this happened.<sup>20</sup> In all her work, she's not met anyone who's not directly impacted by these atrocities.

Yet, inequities continue.

### **HARSH REALITIES**

Here, in Powell River, a coastal mill town near me, colonizing settlers moved the First Nations village a few miles up the coast, damming the river for power and industry, creating paper-culling forests, changing their homeland forever.

Today, we still profit from the atrocities of this state-sanctioned genocide. The question becomes: What are we settlers willing to do, to listen to and embrace? Are we willing to hear our First Nation friends, to see their vision and to truly respect them for their wisdom, traditions and culture? Are we willing to include them, learn from them, allowing them to lead and guide again?

These questions have become all the more critical in the last decade. As I see it, our world is governed mostly by fear, greed and divide. If we continue to fail to change our ways, the impact of climate change, migration, overpopulation, domination and other pressing issues, it occurs to me as self-destructive, disempowering and fatal.

There is something to learn in embracing the ancient wisdom of cultures that existed before colonization and the Industrial Revolution. While we cannot undo what is done, we can listen, learn and change our ways. Kindness, consideration and respect for each other, learning while embracing ancient culture, would surely be a good start.

I've also come to understand that it's not for our First Nation and Aboriginal friends to teach us what they've been through and how to right the

wrong. We must do the hard work to discover their truth. If we offer to support the healing process, we must first learn the customs and traditions that serve them, not us. Remember, we are not trusted by all, yet with patience we can become friends and allies.

### RESPECTING FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

One way to respect our First Nation friends is to acknowledge that this was their land before we settled here. Some people struggle with this simple fact. I think we can all agree that neither the settlers nor First Nations people are going anywhere. So, let's agree to restore the balance. There has to be a better way.

You can easily add a *land acknowledgement* to your e-mail footer and web page. Speak it each day in meetings and other group settings. Most public meetings do this in British Columbia and across Canada. In some environments, such as schools, these acknowledgments have become a daily practice. Adopting this practice takes intentional generation to ensure it does not become unheard. For me, I have no problem saying I live on the sacred lands of the Tla'amin and the coastal Salish peoples. I am proud and genuinely grateful.

I am fortunate to live in this glorious part of Canada where the mountains fall into the sea, the forest tickles the sky and nature swims by every day with the tides, whales, dolphins and seals. My neighbors, the bears, wander over land while eagles, ravens and hummingbirds share the sky. Understandably, some city dwellers may find it harder to see and acknowledge this truth, making the conscious practice of land acknowledgement all the more important.

Consider also that the Indigenous people's cries for having their land back are not necessarily a demand for settlers to give up titles of the homes we own (FYI: in Canada the Crown owns your land, not you.). The Indigenous call of reckoning says land should not be owned but shared by generations over time.

Ancestral wisdom is that land is borrowed from future generations, and it is up to us to pass it on – preferably in better shape than when we inherited it – in perpetuity. (Mmmm, how are we doing on that score?) Leaders of the First Nations

people tend to make decisions with several generations ahead in mind, so maybe returning land ownership back to “unowned” would be something to work toward.

Personally, I don't have the answers as I'm newly hooked by the need to listen and learn.

Recently, I participated in a talking stick ceremony. Initially, I thought that I'd be carving a stick to take home. Soon, I realized we all have traumas to release – our own and inherited ancestral trauma. We are all strong survivors of the 7,500 generations that came before us, and all living humans today are connected genetically to one grandmother.

Each of us walks this earth with the wisdom, the learning and scars of those who have gone before, and we all have healing to do. I found that working with local First Nations sacred culture and ceremony is one way to heal. Being in touch with nature and our relationship to the land, and with each other, is another.

As we're all related, connected, equal and human, surely we should treat each other so.

### WHAT I'VE DONE

So, you may ask what else have I done?

I began to read books about Canada's Indigenous people. Other Canadians are doing likewise. Four of Canada's Top 10 selling books in 2021 focus on First Nation-related topics. There's a list below you can dive into.<sup>21</sup>

I set up a webpage under **bobbc.ca** that includes my photography and commitment to share nature with the world, including this question relating to correcting the impact of colonization and the global economy on our First Nations people in Canada, across Turtle Island and around the world.

Last year, when I invited my Winnipeg friend, Jonathan, to join me as a guest at a Landmark Wisdom Community Saturday event, he asked me, “What is their stand on the United Nations rights of Indigenous people?” and “Do they offer a ‘land acknowledgement’ at the beginning of courses and programs?”<sup>22,23</sup> I discovered that Landmark apparently doesn't have policies on these matters,

so Lily Starr, a former Wisdom Course leader, suggested creating this conversation for the Conference for Global Transformation.

Also, I am involved with a few graduates of the Wisdom Unlimited for the Arts course who are in conversation to take these hard-to-answer questions to a collaborative level. The group plans to offer easy actions for all to follow with guidance of First Nation leaders who are willing to assist us. There's an expectation we settlers do our own research and homework to learn, so we can then share with each other.

In 2022, I plan to learn and share more. Specifically, I will collaborate with individuals who are committed to transforming First Nation relations such that they are fair and honorable both here in Canada and around the world.

Today, truth and reconciliation actions are led by committed and forgiving community leaders, residential school survivors and highly educated "scoops kid" adults. Many of these adults crave the comfort of family and culture and connection and do their utmost not to pass the damage on. Many First Nations youth now speak up for their communities as advocates and educators.

Our local Tla'amin Nation has the *hehewšın* reconciliation movement.<sup>24</sup> Hehewšın means *the way forward* and involves a partnership connecting non-Indigenous people from the Upper Sunshine Coast with the Indigenous people of this land by honoring the teachings and territory of the Tla'amin people. Various gatherings and ceremonies connect people to share insights and learn from the challenges we face.

Quite understandably, some First Nation individuals want to escape from dealing with this pain by living an isolated or assimilated life in the Canadian mainstream, pretending as many of us settlers do that these travesties never happened.

Sadly, the multigenerational scars are real. In Canada, legal responsibility for rectifying these misdeeds lies with the federal government, not the provinces. The slow and seemingly forgotten process leaves many folks upset, enraged and stuck. It's important to accept this healing process is a multigenerational journey.



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

I have a few calls to action for you. First of all, be curious. Ask yourself and your friends these questions:

- Have you taken time to research whose land you live on, who was displaced for your home, industry and community? Where are they now?
- Will you adopt a land acknowledgment for the people's land you live and work on? Make it a practice at the beginning of the day and/or at meetings.
- Can you sponsor First Nations youth to become leaders who help shape the future in what's possible for current and future generations?
- Do we all go home to where we came from? How do we repair this damage?
- Question land ownership. What land ownership reforms would really work for the benefit of all life in perpetuity?
- Can you set up a discussion group or book club to share your learning?
- How can we care for each other with compassion and respect?
- How can we best create restorative healing equations for First Nations people and all humanity?
- How do we care for the land (our planet), so the land can take care of us all?
- How can we ensure we do not profit from, misappropriate or take further advantage of our mistreated First Nations people and friends?

My other recommendations include:

- Be informed on local and national First Nation issues.
- Take care of the land, respect each other and all living things.
- Connect with your local First Nations, Native Americans and Indigenous people.
- Attend First Nation Truth and Reconciliation events, workshops and cultural events.
- Attend a Blanket Ceremony if you can; these are extremely powerful.
- Reach out to First Nation friends, ask where they're at. Be patient. Listen. They may be slow to trust and open up.
- Check your local museums and libraries for First Nation resources.
- Consider joining the team of Wisdom graduates and help build resources for us settlers to learn and share, finding ways to help where we're needed and wanted.
- Read Chelsea Vowel's book "Indigenous Writes." It's the best resource I found and was recommended to me by First Nation leaders. It's perfect for book club discussions to enable deeper understanding.
- Read the book "White Fragility," by Robin DiAngelo, to adjust your nonracist context for listening. (Psst! I didn't think I needed to either.)
- Read books on First Nation topics; there are four noted in the CBC Top 10 Bestselling Canadian books in 2021.<sup>21</sup>
- Nurture yourself with the "Seven Sacred Laws" where elders tell spirit tales in sacred lodges. Everything has a purpose, uniting hearts, spirit and humanity.<sup>25</sup>
- Read the 1996 "Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: People to People, Nation to Nation."<sup>18</sup>
- Check out Indigenous artist Kent Monkman's work.<sup>38</sup>

- Watch a film considering the Indigenous point of view. Examples include:
  - "Into the West" (2005), A six-part miniseries by Steven Spielberg.<sup>26</sup>
  - "The New World" (2005) movie.<sup>27</sup>
  - "The Canary Effect; Kill the Indian, Save the Man" (2006) documentary.<sup>28</sup>
  - "Black Robe" (1998) movie.<sup>29</sup>
  - Canada's National Film Board Playlist for Orange Shirt Day.<sup>30</sup>
  - Kevin Lamoureux's TEDx on Truth and Reconciliation.<sup>31</sup>
  - Amazon Tribe Leader Nixiwaka Yawanawa's TEDx talk, "We're all connected."<sup>7</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Progress begins when you, the readers, take action. Ease into this. We are participants of change. Together we'll get there. I am looking forward to hearing from you. What have you learned, what can you offer?

Many First Nations people are also proud Canadians, proud of their mixed origins and our multicultural society. Some are proud Catholics and royalists. We are a fine woven blanket of mixed treaty people. You and all of us included, our roots, our ancestors, sacred spirits. We are all products of peace, threads woven together into a tapestry of humanity created in the spirit of unity.

Vowel reminds us that the Royal Commission's report identified that "assimilation policies have done great damage" and solutions lie in respecting self-governance to preserve culture and language and design schools specifically for, and by, First Nations people.<sup>20,33</sup>

We must acknowledge the thousands of years of traditions and teachings interrupted by this brutal spirit-breaking round-up that stripped people of their dignity, ties to land and family.

We owe our First Nations people a debt of gratitude for living on their lands, and we owe them our support for their journey back to healthy

traditions, an enriched culture with lasting peace and harmony, and a full restoration to balance.

Here's to the teachers and language-keepers working to preserve what's left. They include a handful of elders recording words, some never written before.

Here's to the \$40 billion compensation settlements and revamp of Canada's First Nations child welfare system, the apologies from the Canadian government and the Catholic Church, the Pope's possible visit this year and to all the Canadians awakening to these devastating events and seeking to make amends.<sup>33, 34, 35</sup>

During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final event on Dec. 15, 2015, the prime minister reiterated the government of Canada's commitment to work in partnership with Indigenous communities, the provinces, territories and other vital partners to fully implement the commission's recommendations, starting with adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as law.<sup>36</sup>

I am so grateful to live here in the pristine nature on the wild west coast, surrounded by forests, oceans, clean air and vast unspoiled vistas with these kind people.

I say we all stand firm that these travesties must end and never happen again.

Please share what you now see is possible.

According to a First Nations website on pedagogy, interconnection is a central principle in the Inuit and Métis worldviews and ways of knowing. "Some First Nations sum this up with the phrase 'All my relations,'" it says. "This mindset reflects people who are aware that everything in the universe is connected. It also reinforces that everyone and everything has a purpose, is worthy of respect and caring, and has a place in the grand scheme of life."

Thus, I say to you: Thank you and to all our relations.<sup>37</sup>

*I acknowledge that I live, work, play, learn and create on the sacred lands of Tla'amin and Coast Salish people.*

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# GLOBAL GROUND

KET FOX

## ABSTRACT

*This paper is not some manifesto, rather it opens a practical inquiry into individual and global peace, as in guileless behavior and tranquil sensations of well-being, enjoyment, power, enthusiasm, energy and inner quiet (constituted by focused thinking and freedom from thoughts or no thoughts)— even when confronted with violence, disputes or enduring physical pain or discomfort.*

## INTRODUCTION

The vast and diverse issues regarding world peace easily exceed the scope of this paper. The sheer enormity of this inquiry raises even more fundamental questions concerning peace on earth. Would not realizing such an idea require massive resources, complex interactions and what's just as important — global transformation? In other words, would it take a worldwide cultural paradigm shift for human beings to realize world peace?

I assert we have a worldwide paradigm shift staring us in the face. As Stephen Hawking, the late English theoretical physicist, put it:

"We are close to the tipping point, where global warming becomes irreversible...[that] could push the Earth over the brink, to become like Venus, with a temperature of 250 degrees [Celsius], and raining sulfuric acid."<sup>1</sup>

Some climate experts regard this scenario as an overstatement. It is, nonetheless, theoretically possible for rising CO2 levels to raise sea levels that would engulf some coastal cities before the middle of the 21st century.<sup>2</sup>

Facing such immediate threats of climate change, political unrest, melting polar ice caps, continuing global sea rise, aggressive pandemics, slavery, tyranny and violence, I have reached the conclusion that world peace, however implausible, has now become necessary to continue life on earth.

Why do I make such a bold assertion? What can we do about it?

The long history of human beings calls for each of us first to look inside our personal experiences and find our own genesis for inner peace and peace of mind to chart the way to world peace. We must also look at our relationship to disputes, conflicts and war.

The framework for exploring the necessity of global harmony could well begin with two startling statistics:

1. Half of women killed in the U.S. are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends
2. Two-thirds of children killed are murdered by their parents or guardians.<sup>3,4</sup>

This makes growing up and living at home far more dangerous than braving life on city streets.

Thus, family life must lay the foundation for leading us to a path for peace.

Although it must be obvious that world peace will not come about only by creating peace within one's family, it may be a good start. In other words, I assert that family life lies at the heart of creating a workable genesis for peace.

Nonetheless, none of us can generate world peace just working alone or only within one's family. We must partner with each other to resolve incessant bickering, discord and homicide. Determining the root causes for conflict and deconstructing them requires a powerful set of principles for individual and global inquiry.

As a child, I experienced early recurring, intermittent and inexplicable family upsets and infighting that landed for me as a kind of childhood shock. These early experiences initiated a personal inquiry starting in 1969 that expanded in 1978 to include the possibility of everyone finding peace for themselves and every sentient being.

In 1978, I wrote a paper for myself called the "World Peace Project Source Document."<sup>5</sup> In it, I asked two questions:

- What forces generate the climate that perpetuates war and conflict?
- What makes the actions you and I take effective for fulfilling on any promise for peace?

Since then, I've been in this inquiry and found six drivers that shape adversarial relations borne out of my childhood:

1. **Force** – an addictive, *knee-jerk* habit of opposition
2. **Abandonment** – feeling alone or unsupported
3. **"Appliancing"** – considering ourselves and others as inhuman
4. **Scarcity** – a deficiency and/or presumptive expectation of lack
5. **Fear** – a chronic apprehension
6. **Masquerade** – a fictional identity, often

built for self-protection, from our thoughts, stories and imaginations.

These largely psychological and behavioral drivers evoke deeper insight into the obstacles and challenges that impede peace and provoke dispute and war.

## THE VALUE OF PEACE

Just how have we humans made such a mess of the world? It's no secret that you and I live in a dangerous, or potentially dangerous, world. As a species, we've always been prey to stormy weather, predatory beasts, catastrophic environments, virulent diseases, unanticipated accidents and violent attacks from each other. In fact, we now live in a uniquely perilous time in history.

This writing builds no absolute case or proves any one point about peace as a respite from tension, stress and dread. Further, it proposes no single program, religious philosophy, political ideology, economic model, social strategy or benevolent leader to heal the world's ills.

Rather, we can come face-to-face with causing peace where we are right now. Consider, no peace is in the past or future. Neither exists outside of concept, imagination or recollection.

We now may be either flourishing or languishing as we face diversity, competition and, perhaps, organized armed conflict. Given our nature and environmental challenges, what are we to do about conflict that holds disputes in place?

## THE BEGINNING OF APPREHENSION

I submit that we all begin early in life to want peace. During my childhood, whenever I experienced joy, I found that it contrasted sharply with the adult angst and worry that surrounded me. Often, I was left puzzled and speechless. I wondered, "What was it that occasionally provoked such anger and agitation from otherwise caring and responsible parents and family members?"

My school life through university also revealed that many fellow students suffered through their own family conflicts and abuse. These experiences led me to wonder: Do the majority of people favor

peace, joy, pleasure, love, compassion over hurt, sorrow, violence or aggression? This observation initiated my 52-year inquiry into whether inner peace was viable or even possible.

I first looked at what is it to “be related” and what do we want from relationship? From studies on what attitudes lead 50-60% of U.S. marriages to end in divorce, it appears to me that four factors come into play:

1. Resentful criticism
2. Defensive escalation
3. Contemptuous disrespect
4. Stonewalling withdrawal.<sup>6</sup>

These practices pull apart or disrupt relationships and thereby do not engender world peace. On the flip side, intimacy, respect and acceptance tend to bond us together in relationship. These attributes and others comprise practices that shape healthy relationships.

Could this be where we uncover the flowering of peace as our innate state of awareness?

### THE CASE FOR OPTIMISM

Perhaps, the cause of the human discord is revealed by recent studies indicating that adverse childhood experiences lead to traumatic reactions and may pass genetically through four generations.<sup>7</sup> This finding adds credence to an older debate involving “nurture vs. nature,” suggesting that genetics and/or environmental factors form early childhood personalities and characteristics.

Could the impetus of both genetics and the environment also account for the “human condition” of psychological suffering, such as incessant thinking, hyper vigilance and obsessive thoughts of the past/future?

*“The distinction between the past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.”<sup>8</sup>*

– Albert Einstein

What might account for the fact that children tend to display a natural happiness when healthy, free of pain, properly cared for and well fed? Yet, growing up often seems to confront us unavoidably with injury and loss.

A study on optimism observes that children under the age of 7 are generally in a better mood than most adults over age 20 — all other conditions being equal.<sup>9</sup> This study found that children respond to queries of how an event, such as a visit to Disneyland, was “great” or “awful.” In contrast, adults’ responses were “not bad” or “not so good.” Children related to what was so for them, whereas adults tended to speak to what was not happening in the moment.

Could these findings translate into a scalable practice that derives global peace from personal serenity?

### A COMMUNITY OF PERSONALITIES

Could this cultural foundation form the impetus for insecurity, defensiveness and delusion, which often seem to overwhelm our shared, pressing concerns for survival and fulfillment?

Can we truly get along with ourselves as individuals and each other inside our communities?

In the face of these complex challenges to human relationships, any vision for peace must speak directly to the seemingly insoluble problems of human survival, as well as to living cooperatively with one another.

These concepts and ideas originate inside basic family interactions and then spread through community conversations and economic transactions. If efficacious methods do exist, exactly how might these procedures work? What ways of being and behaviors must we bring to bear on a global scale that transform our current conditions into cultivating peace?

Below, I list principles developed over many years of resolving conflicts by leading professional negotiations and mediations within various local and international cultures. I say successful because, in my opinion, all the participants eventually found empowerment in mutually satisfying, ethical results. You may have practices that vary from this sampling below. However, the

point remains that you must design the set that works for you.

Here is my list detailed in a paper I originally wrote in 2008 called "The Virtue of Negotiating, An Exercise in Principle":

- Show at least a modicum of respect through manners, etiquette, body language, tone of voice, choice of words, etc. to everyone, whether or not you think that someone merits respect.
- Speak and act as though your client or counterpart speaks only the truth, even when you suspect otherwise. Ongoing outcomes and inspections will most likely prove the consistency and veracity of all communications.
- Honor your word. This means considering all of your words as profoundly valuable. This includes:
  1. acting upon your professional know-how
  2. delivering what you said you would
  3. fulfilling your promises on time
  4. requesting an agreeable alteration of your promise when appropriate
  5. disclosing to anyone who might need to know as soon as you realize you won't be completing on time or won't be keeping your original promise
  6. communicating what you will do to balance any loss resulting from your unfulfilled promise
  7. realizing results that others could reasonably and implicitly come to expect of you.
- Practice integrity all the time. Integrity includes communicating truthfully while respecting confidentiality and disclosure; doing complete work to serve yourself and others with excellence.
- Never bluff.
- Within good faith negotiations or any civil

discourse, never lie, cheat or steal. Do not intentionally assist, enable, comply with, or conspire with, another to lie, cheat or steal.

- If faced with disingenuous, deranged, delusional or destructive individuals or groups in negotiations, call upon, as needed, appropriate resources, specialists and/or methodologies for managing factual revelation, or for quelling any threat of imminent violence or danger.
- Conduct a "reality check" on every assumption, every suspicion. In short, verify, verify, verify.
- Never insult, demean, intimidate, cower, gloat, shame or boast.
- Hire, recruit, cultivate sufficient and professional support from qualified and appropriate resources, specialists and/or methodologies such that you need never succumb to attempts to intimidate you, thus eliminating the need to rely on tactics of force to reach or shape an outcome.

### **THE NATURE OF FEAR**

So, how did humanity succumb to the insanity of stoking fear, despair, anger and pointless distraction? How did humans come to be so distressed and angry?

Consider that our primal fears play a role here. A primal fear is defined as an innate fear that is programmed into our brains.<sup>10</sup> Human beings are born with two primal fears: a fear of falling and loud noises. All other human angst and anxiety are provoked from fantasy, memories, interpretation and imaginings. In other words, from illusion.

Yet, our fears seem to possess lives of their own. Recent neurobiological studies of fear confirm that the brain registers and stores a sudden threat (or the perception of sudden threat) much faster and more indelibly than our cognitive, rational thoughts and experiences.<sup>11</sup>

Another recent study found a head injury that destroys the brain's ability to make new conscious memories still left the injured brain capable of an involuntary, automatic reaction

to avoid a consciously forgotten, previously experienced pinprick.<sup>12</sup>

Environmental forces also trigger fear. Ice ages have played a pivotal role in human development and fear. Many archeologists, meteorologists and climatologists now believe that surviving prehistory's major and minor ice ages (some occurring over 8,000 years) that threatened our species shaped our territorial defensiveness and the development of cities.<sup>13</sup>

Just what determines survival in modern society?

Besides long-held traditions of territorial conflict, we also cradle childhood legacies of apprehension. After adolescence, our repressed memories shape our adult relationships to fear. As children, we intermittently fear that we don't have enough to survive (enough food, love, protection, etc.).

By extension, we know that nations often have so been at odds with each other just as children threatening each other on a playground. Fear herds us as a species toward self-protection, desperately trying to gain control over, or evade, the domination of anything or anyone who might oppose us, disadvantage us or cause us loss. Today, we see that playing out as tensions rise between Russia and western nations.

## INTELLIGENCE, KNOWLEDGE AND THE WISDOM OF VISION

Who are we human beings? Why are we alive? How are we cognitively aware of our conditions and circumstances?

What must we learn, know and comprehend about life, the world and relationships to survive and thrive? Today, in developed societies built upon economic agreements and transactional procedures, living, working and thriving demands sufficient education and know-how.

To master a body of information (intelligence) mustn't one envision the difference between knowing what to do (knowledge) and doing what you know (wisdom) to effect transformation?

Though global transformation alone does not ensure world peace, would an expanded awareness of our conditions more likely call

forth worldwide cooperation and responsible actions necessary for resolving dissidence while simultaneously restoring the biosphere for all the life we have left on Earth?

## ECONOMICS AND CONFLICT

One can hardly think about how to create world peace without taking into account the interplay between human behavior and economics whether it's on an individual, community, national or global level. But that subject is so complex that it won't be addressed here and may be the subject of a future paper for the journal.

## CONCLUSION

As unlikely as such transformative responses may currently appear, peace is not only *feasible*, but necessary for life to *thrive* on Earth. On this basis, I invite you to participate in this inquiry. May this self-generated conversation for inner satisfaction and peace evoke harmony within you and inspire serenity from others. May this practice cultivate a context that spreads global and ecologically-supportive cooperation.

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# ENGAGING YOUTH WITH NATURE TO RESTORE MENTAL AND ECOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

ROBIN KERMODE

## ABSTRACT

*With adults busy navigating how they get themselves through the pandemic, I believe the mental well-being of pre-teens and younger teens has been neglected. This article offers my vision as to how we can address the mental well-being of our young people and why it is important to have them contributing to restoring and preserving our earth. This paper is about the process of creating an education program for 10- to 14-year-old involving an outlying wildlife sanctuary in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The underpinning idea for the program is based on research that shows mental health and time spent in nature are strongly correlated.*

## INTRODUCTION

There is a proverb or *whakataukī* from the Indigenous *Māori* of New Zealand that states: “*He tina ki runga, he tāmore ki raro.*” This roughly translates as: “To flourish above, one must be firmly rooted below.”

I take this proverb to mean that if we look after our *tamariki* (children) or *rangatahi* (young people and teens) we will grow. More broadly, if we look after what we are a part of – nature, in my mind – we and they will also flourish.

As an educator, I have always had two interests: the well-being of our youth and environment. It was during the COVID-19 pandemic that I came to see strong intersections between these two interests. Young people and teens love exploring, socializing with each other and playing in their environment. Unfortunately, they could not really do any of these things – or at least not in a physical sense while those of us in Auckland, Aotearoa, also known as New Zealand (and undoubtedly elsewhere, too) were in lockdown situations. The potentially adverse impacts on young people in our major city worried me.

I had picked up what I thought was my dream job. It was a role that came with an expectation that I would further develop an educational program for young people in New Zealand that had been started by someone else for an outlying wildlife sanctuary.

Even before the pandemic, researchers estimated that 10-to-20 percent of adolescents had some sort of mental illness that would persist in their adult life. In 2020, University of Auckland researchers issued a report, "Youth Mental Health in Aotearoa New Zealand: Greater Urgency Required."<sup>1</sup> Key insights from that report included the following:

- Nationally, poor mental health for youth is persistently inequitable and becoming worse
- Impacts of COVID-19 on youth mental health are likely to be extensive and enduring
- Protection and promotion of youth mental well-being are a matter of urgency.

Noting what seemed to be a lack of urgency around addressing young people's mental health, the researchers wrote: "This glaring oversight must be acknowledged, understood and addressed. Continued failure to do so will ultimately result in significant harms to the overall well-being and economic prosperity of many nations, including Aotearoa New Zealand."

Mental illness can take many forms including anxiousness, depression, self-harm and being prone to injury and substance abuse. More than a year passed since that report and new COVID-19 variants had begun appearing. One could easily imagine that teens' mental state may even have worsened. Given this disturbing situation, I became more committed than ever to address it, using the opportunities provided by my new role.

I was aware of other research indicating that although young children have strong connections with nature, such connections tend to fade as young people reach their teen years.<sup>2</sup> It is not so much that there is a disconnect with nature, but other distractions, such as city life, technology and social activities, tend to occupy teens' minds and activities. These researchers were advocating

for new ways to deliver curriculum, particularly in the early adolescent years through nature-based programs, based on the idea that they could make a massive difference.

Another researcher, Louise Chawla, an environmental psychologist, similarly found that strong connections to nature influenced how young people, aged 10 to 14, feel about themselves. In a 2020 article, she wrote: "Ensuring urban children maintain nature connections through adolescence is crucial to tackling Earth's serious environmental problems. But it will also require more young people to confront the difficult realization that the world's climate is *in crisis*. For this, we need to develop better ways to help them *cope*."<sup>3</sup>

Something that was also apparent to me was that young people can often see phenomena, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, as huge problems around which they have little influence or control. Climate anxiety, for example, could also adversely affect their mental health. I understood from earlier reading and experience that adults could assist young people by creating safe opportunities to share emotions and encouraging positive time outdoors in nature. I felt that adults – and, in particular, we as educators – had a responsibility to assist young people to care for nature and themselves as part of nature.

For me, the research advice made sense: young people and teens need time to connect with nature. They need opportunities to actively engage in conservation and spend time in the natural environment. They needed a program based in nature, designed to make a difference to their mental health and well-being. There has been a disconnect from nature since *Māori* first arrived in Aotearoa and especially those who live in cities. At the same time, it is also important for adults to be there to assist young people when they struggle with the consequences of feeling part of a natural world that is currently at risk.

My vision was clear: Involve young people with nature to assist, preserve and restore their own mental well-being as well as of the environment. The educational program I was to be developing was targeted at 10-to-14-year-olds.

## SHAPING THE PROGRAM

The original idea for the program involved participants learning about kiwi, takahe and other endemic birds and plants, as well as about predators and other threats. Learning could take place through a visit to an outlying wildlife sanctuary and a pre-session and post-session in each of the schools that registered for the program.

The funders also wanted a transformational program. As I spent time thinking about the possibilities, I wondered how to deliver on this transformational aspect. My first thought was to somehow expand the original program. But I was not sure that would achieve the vision for what could be transformative in terms of young people's mental health and well-being. What if I could somehow assist our young people to develop lifelong intimate and emotional connections between conservation and their well-being? I thought about knowledge and the benefits of more experiential and immersive learning and the ripple effects that could occur through the sharing of positive experiences.

My vision called for school leaders and teachers to be so excited about this program that there would be a flood of schools wanting to participate. I dreamed everyone would be talking about the program and participants would be wanting to better understand their role as *kaitiaki* (guardians of land and sea).

Working with others, I was able to embrace and allow the following values from the Indigenous *Māori* worldview which I thought beautifully underpinned the program.<sup>4,5</sup>

***Kaitiakitanga*** (Active Guardianship, Responsibilities and Relationships with the World) – who are my *kaitiaki* (guardians of the land)? These *kaitiaki* can be a person or group that cares for an area such as a lake or forest. The young people would need to think about the question: Who/what am I *kaitiaki* of?

***Whanaungatanga*** (close connection between people; kinship). We would want them to think about: what are the key relationships I have now that are important to me?

***Koha*** (offering/contribution). It would be essential to also think about: what does the environment give me and how do I contribute to its well-being?

***Tūrangawaewae*** (“a place to stand,” a sense of identity and independence). It is seen as extremely important for young people to learn about and know who they are, where they come from and their values. When learners know this, they can see how they connect and are part of the wider ecology and context of environmental sustainability.

## AS SOON AS I BEGAN, I GOT STOPPED

I could easily say yes to the intentions, values and concepts from the *Māori* world and there were some worthwhile activities proposed. The missing piece for me was how could we ensure that this program delivered on its intentions: how would we know it would be transformational?

The more I thought about it, the more I envisioned a program with ripples out into the world on a global scale. (Think of environmental activists: Greta Thunberg, David Attenborough or Jane Goodall and what they've accomplished in motivating people whether you agree with them or not). I challenged myself to think about how and what to deliver so that every student would graduate and in their own way motivate others who came across their path and lead by taking actions. Somehow, the program, in my opinion, needed more depth, detail, passion and some kind of “X” factor around its delivery.

The “X” factor I envisioned would be something that was exciting, adventurous and student-directed, though teachers would set up the actions and collaborate as a partner with young people and teens (*rangatahi*) involved. It would be what everyone was waiting for when we all came out of lockdown! I wanted a program ready yesterday!

For a while, though, I chose to stay with my discomfort centered on not knowing what to do. Every day while walking or swimming when we were allowed to swim in lockdown, I kept asking the sea, birds, bush and universe for ideas. At the same time, I also kept asking anyone who might have a program to assist me. I kept looking online, too.

I kept thinking of Indigenous peoples' practices. I pondered how they lived for generations so connected to nature. One *Māori* proverb I kept repeating to myself was "*ko au te taiao ko te taiao ko a,u,*" which translates to: I am the environment and the environment is me. I kept repeating it to myself. *Māori* live by that and I wanted to also.

I also thought about a personal expeditionary exploration I took before lockdown to sub-Antarctic Islands. At Macquarie Island in the sub-Antarctic Ocean, I experienced breathtaking views of penguins flying through the water (see my Report from the Field in this journal on that experience) and where we were visitors to nature on Enderby Island, Sandy Bay, where the hooker sea lions checked us out as invaders to their home space. Could I create a similar expedition experience and more? We might not see whales and penguins though our endemic plants and birds are very cool. Could I create a program that made our species super exciting and cool? Also, could the program be healing and engaging for 10-to-14-year-olds from the get-go?

I continued to research other programs and did online courses. I recalled the July 2020 program called "Inspire for Teachers," run by the Sir Peter Blake Trust that I attended in person. This was an eye-opening program to inspire teachers like me to be creative with environmental education in their classrooms. We had many rewilding experts who visited us, and I learned so many things and different ways of doing things.

For example, I was introduced to meter squares, an approach to survey flora and fauna in a small area on a rocky shore. This was a transformational activity for me and I did not realize you could find so many varieties of life in a meter square. I made a note. I was also introduced to an application to help identify flora and fauna I could not recognize. I experienced climate change as a swimmer with more salt and pollution to navigate.

There were so many different aspects to think about. I felt that I was in a privileged position and, yet, I was definitely starting to sit on a picket fence not knowing which way to go. The thing that kept me going was thinking of our *rangatahi*. They were worth it and we had wildlife sanctuaries at our doorstep, which could be explored further.

Whenever I thought of both these things I kept going and trusted an answer would come for a transformational program. I also just kept my focus on *rangatahi* and how great they were with their minds and imaginations. Could we showcase that in a program?

One day I remember I went into a hole. I could not write. I felt that I did not have enough of anything. The time was ticking by. I felt trapped inside my own inadequacies and was starting to think I was dreaming to deliver a transformational program, let alone write one. What had I gotten myself into? What was I going to do?

I do have a "tribe" (a group of people who listen to me and they support me that I can do something). I want to thank all those people who assisted me generously and believed I could lead a project like this. I certainly had doubt a few days. My tribe is from Aotearoa, Australia, America and England. They all kept me focused on our *rangatahi* and their coaching was simply, spend whatever time you can in nature, talk to others who also care about wildlife sanctuaries and continue to think about *rangatahi*. So that is what I did.

#### **A MEETING WITH MY "MANTLE' GROUP"**

Then an idea struck me.

I am part of a group who use "Mantle of the Expert" pedagogy (explained below) as part of their educational practice.<sup>6</sup> At a Zoom meeting when we were still in lockdown, I was introduced to something that blew my mind. I danced around the room in excitement. It was what I had been waiting for. Teachers from a primary school shared about their program called Dog Squad.<sup>7</sup> It was written during New Zealand's first lockdown.

Dog Squad was designed for home/school learning for 8-to-12-year-olds and was first used during the national COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020. Auckland educators, Renee Downey and Viv Aitken, created the program, which was then enhanced by other teachers. The subject was an adventure story about conservation in New Zealand with young people taking the role of dog trainers whose dogs located endangered native kiwi birds, which were then transferred, along with other native birds, to predator-free islands to protect them.

I had that moment of instant, childlike, earnest wanting. It was surreal. I just had to have something like Dog Squad for the wildlife sanctuary education program. I knew this kind of program would work, especially in these uncertain times when we were not sure whether any school would be open anytime soon. I loved the blend of student-directed experiences, teacher expertise, online and/or in-person learning and the collaboration between teachers and students.

A cluster of schools in *Tamaki Makaurau* (Auckland) have members of what is called the “Mantle of the Expert Cluster.” These schools draw on the work of the late British drama educator and academic, Dorothy Heathcote. She describes the Mantle of the Expert approach to learning as “an active, urgent, purposeful view of learning, in which knowledge is to be operated on, not merely taken in.”<sup>8</sup>

Another proponent of this approach, Tim Taylor, says it “involves children co-constructing the curriculum and investigating the curriculum. The curriculum isn’t delivered to them. It’s a really damaging idea, this idea that the curriculum is delivered to kids. It’s not a parcel. Kids aren’t letter boxes. No one is. That isn’t how learning happens.”<sup>6</sup>

In the fully incorporated Mantle of the Expert approach, young people and teens learn across all curriculum areas by taking on the roles of experts engaged in a high-status project for a fictional client. For example, they might be charged with designing a world-class sanctuary for injured dolphins. Each project is sustained for a long period, and the teacher moves in and out of roles along with the young learners. They learn going in and out of imagined worlds, which they are able to do well from 4-14 years (a process Plato invented called *metaxis*).

Teachers in the Dog Squad project were impressed with the buy-in from children and *whānau* (families) and the level of sustained, self-directed activity. Children responded in a variety of creative ways and showed a desire to learn more about New Zealand history and the environment.

For the outlying wildlife sanctuary, I saw the potential to introduce native birds that lived there such as the *takahē*, kiwi, *tīeke*/saddleback

and *kororā* (little blue) penguins, along with native plants, as a Mantle of the Expert-inspired adventure. Propelled into action, I asked for permission to use the Dog Squad as a model. I will never forget the generosity of the writers in allowing all parts of the program for this particular use and no charge. It says a lot about their collegiality, the way they live and breathe learning themselves and their commitment to education more broadly.

In the course of a month, another teacher in the Auckland expert cluster and I co-created and further developed the outlining wildlife sanctuary education program. We included a requirement for students to assist for an hour with an organization in their community in restoring, rewilding and regenerating the earth. Also, we added a component for students to complete an art piece, such as story-like writing, sculpture, puppet play script, drawing or painting to capture their overall experience and to earn medals throughout the program that contribute to rewilding Mother Earth.

#### **WHY A MANTLE-INSPIRED ADVENTURE WILL WORK**

Thus, the program was born. We called it “The *Aranga Kaitiaki* (Leaders of the Future) Rangers Adventure.” It has nine episodes and, after an initial trial, it has a possibility of being delivered online if they could do a virtual visit to an outlying wildlife sanctuary. First and foremost, we would start the program and as an in-person trip experience.

The main outcome for *rangatahi* would be to be inspired by one another, experience a high level of sustained, self-directed growth and develop team-building skills. We envisioned them becoming conservation leaders contributing to rewilding, regenerating, restoring and returning endemic bird life species to bush areas on the mainland now and in the future, everywhere.

The Mantle of the Expert methodology uses a range of storytelling and drama conventions to support actions that unfold, building tension and making links between the imagined and the real world. The nine episodes include concepts and competencies from different parts of the school

curriculum, such as social studies, English, *Māori* language, *Te Reo Māori*, history, drama and science, including climate change.

In episodes one-to-six, students prepare for being an *Aranga Kaitiaki* ranger. They travel back to Richard Henry's era. One of New Zealand's conservation heroes, Henry lived from 1849- to-1929. He showed resilience and persistence through the darkest of times. Though he didn't succeed in his lifetime, his ideas lived on to inspire others.

He translocated endangered species to islands, trained dogs to find kiwi and *kākāpō* (the world's largest and only flightless parrot) and took meticulous notes on the *kākāpō* that are still used today. Henry's muzzled dog led him to finding the birds. Later, his approach led to training dogs in New Zealand to locate stoat and rat predators. These introduced species, as well as possums, reportedly kill around 68,000 native birds every night. This includes eggs and chicks.

In episode seven, students move into an imagined world where they are an *Aranga Kaitiaki* (future leader) ranger. They are supposedly working for The Richard Henry *Whakauka* Trust, a fictitious organization said to be funded by the New Zealand government to save native and endemic species. The students learn that "Call the AK (*Aranga Kaitiaki*)" risks becoming a common saying as more and more native and endemic species are threatened by climate change and human activities. As trained *Aranga Kaitiaki* rangers, they have responsibilities and everyone admires their work and who they are everywhere.

Restoring, rewilding and regenerating nature, being resilient, innovative and positive is their mantra.

In episodes eight and nine, students, who have become *Aranga Kaitiaki* rangers, are called out to help an injured kiwi. A boatie's dog was let loose in the wildlife sanctuary to pee and its dog instinct found a kiwi and left it injured. The kiwi manages to get away just as the island ranger sees the dog and shouts at it to get away. In the exercise, the rangers must use their training to find the injured kiwi. After finding it, they restore it to health and imagine taking the kiwi and releasing it back into the wild. They sit quietly and imagine what

Henry would say if he could see how things are now. They write his words and speak them aloud. Their ranger work is picked up by the media. *Aranga Kaitiaki* rangers become overnight heroes. There is a reverberating buzz around these very special rangers and their work to improve the environment.

At the end, *rangatahi* reflect on their learning adventure – what went well, what they learned and what actions they might take in the real world based on their experience. They will have undertaken self-directed actions, encouraged exploration and shared experiences with others. Then they document their self-directed actions and submit an application for a Toyota Kiwi Guardian medal. Throughout the episodes, they can apply for awards that are all intricately linked. At the end, they can also apply for an *Aranga Kaitiaki* Super Certificate which outlines the skills they have gained in a fictitious world and which translate and transfer to the real world.

#### OFFERING A PILOT PROGRAM

With lockdown still happening in September 2021, a pilot program was initiated with a family of five teens, aged 11 to 17, during October 2021. The family had limited access to a laptop computer. The program ran over 20 days. The teens recorded their work in their notebooks.

They moved through the nine episodes to become *Aranga Kaitiaki* rangers culminating in their spending three days and two nights at the outlying wildlife sanctuary in January 2022. Here is a brief account of what happened: On the trip out to the sanctuary, I portrayed two real people to give the *rangatahi* a sense of roles that humans play in the environment. First, I put on a beard and became Walter Buller. As one young student, now a ranger noted, Buller could have been a hero by saving a pair of huia, a native bird. Instead, he shipped the last known pair of huia, mounted by taxidermy, to Lord Rothschild of the Linnean Society in London. Buller received lots of money for sending these birds.

Coming out of character, I connected the huia extinction story to the seabirds of today. Like the huia, some seabirds are currently on the brink of extinction. Then, I portrayed a modern-day

character named Chris Gaskin, who represented the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Portraying him, I talked about various birds, including terns, gulls, penguins and shags, noting there were only 39 individual fairy terns left on an outlying wildlife sanctuary.

As Gaskin, I conveyed the extraordinary nature of seabirds and their embodiment of the spirit of the *Māori* of our region. By monitoring our seabirds on land and sea, we can see the interconnectedness of everything living. Their health affects our health. In the wider Hauraki Gulf region, there are 27 of 86 seabird species in Aotearoa, or New Zealand, 38 of which are not found anywhere else in the world. Worldwide, there are 360 seabird species.

By the time the family of teens arrived, they had understood a key conservation message. As one student/ranger put it, "By the end of his talk, I understood seabirds could go the way of huia, that is, become extinct if we don't learn more. We have to give them space and learn about them. Having only seen one seabird on the trip, I am getting the picture."

After the would-be rangers settled in their lodgings, they set off with swimming gear and dinner fixings. It was so hot. The freshness of the water cooled them off. Then, some explored the area, finding many crabs and shrimps. After dinner, we headed back to our base, put on some warm clothes and went for a walk to see if we could see some *takahē* and their chicks. We did not find any. We kept looking for land seabirds.

All the birds seemed to be hiding. It was still quite hot. Making our way back through the mature bush, we saw the sun set and a *ruru* (native owl) fly off. On the way back to the base, I declared a silent space. I wanted to give everyone time to absorb and think about what we had just experienced. We did not speak for some time. Once we returned, we had a catch-up of what the day was like for everyone before heading off to bed. One family member revealed how frightened she had been in the silence of night in the bush. Another wanted to stay here forever.

On the second day, we headed out to trial the "meter square," a survey of a one meter by one

meter patch in an intertidal community, to see what animals and plants lived there. These rangers found very few because it was mid-tide but they hunted for crabs under rocks anyway. Eventually, we saw dotterels (one of their tricks is they camouflage so well) and *tōrea* (oystercatchers) and a *tōrea* chick. When the rangers surrounded the parent, (maybe the mum *tōrea*) and her chick, I asked them to step back as they were not giving them space and they were getting agitated.

During the rest of the visit, we experienced the spectacular views, looked for *tieke* (saddlebacks), *pōpokotea* (whiteheads), *riroriro* (grey warbler), *tauhou* (silveryeye) and searched for specific plants including *harakeke*, *manuka* and *kawakawa*. Some rangers collected bird feathers they found on the ground from a *weka*, *tieke*, *takahē* and *pukeko*.

Rangers also had been given a task by the local museum, whose ornithologist said there were some bones hidden in the wildlife sanctuary belonging to an extinct creature. The rangers started looking more closely at the map and started digging.

I wanted us all to see and hear kiwi on this trip. We heard kiwi and we did not see any. Perhaps, not surprising. There are only 40 kiwi in the sanctuary. However, one ranger spotted a gannet diving. Its trick is to dive and hit the water at 100 kilometers an hour, and it can dive down 25 meters.

Between ecological trips and in the evenings, the rangers swam, entertained each other, wrote in their journals and watched a movie or two. Some of their evaluation comments are:

"I learnt to rewild the bush and not leave paper in it."

"It is important to save one kiwi at a time with their numbers dwindling."

"Being an AK ranger is the best job in the world."

"I learnt about the *kākāpō* bird, which I had never heard of and didn't know it was under threat."

"I missed another class to be in this one as I knew it would be exciting and I would learn more, and it was the best choice I have made."

## SUMMARY

After this pilot program, I am more committed than ever to my vision becoming a reality for more *rangatahi*. I look forward to expanding the AK ranger-inspired adventure to students in several participating schools. I want to give 10-to-14-year-olds hope, agency and a sense of being in partnership with the environment and others as companions on their journey of life. Through this program, we will work to enhance their knowledge of how to regenerate, restore and rewild Mother Earth, and their understanding of both legacy and responsibility.

In so doing, I see possibilities for their enhanced mental well-being, for feeling better about themselves and the ecosystems on which we all depend. I carry hope these *rangatahi* will inspire adults who partner with them and others beyond the program by their actions and artwork.

In time, I hope everyone, especially the *rangatahi* who spend time in wildlife sanctuaries in Aotearoa, will come to draw knowledge, life skills and strength from their experiences. The transformative result will be inherent in their own desire and commitment to protect our environment and share it wisely with all species. There is also a vision. This program can be adapted for other outlying, or on land, wildlife sanctuaries. We will start with doing a trial and tweaking this inspired adventure first. A team of three educators already are excited to do so.

*Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro nōnā te ngāhere, ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga, nōnā te ao* (The bird that consumes the miro owns the forest, the bird that consumes knowledge owns the world.).

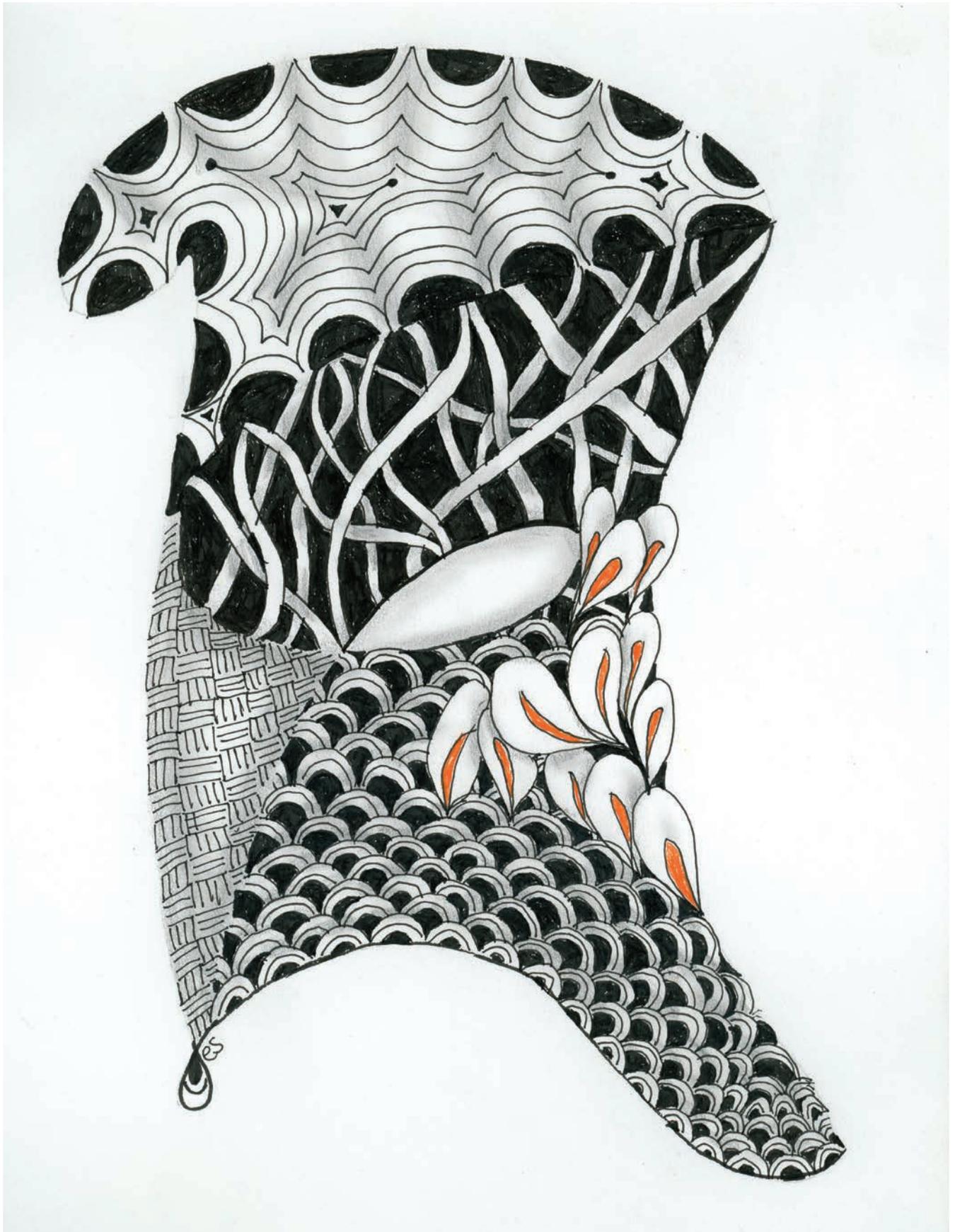
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# DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

Each year, participating in the Inquiry Explorations Program or the Inquiries of the Social Commons offers a means of discovering something I don't know about myself or the universe. By engaging with other participants who often view a topic in a distinctly different way than I do, I suddenly find myself startled and invigorated.

Sometimes, an inquiry leads to a “Wow, I never thought of it that way.” Or it can bring about a head-scratching bewilderment such as, “How did that person come to *that* conclusion?” Either way, the result is expansion. The horizon seems wider. The sky seems higher. The ocean seems deeper.

Thus, inquiry is quite a wonderful process. The inquiry calls are offered on these topics:



**Social Commons:**

The memory you forgot



**Living as a Created Self:**

Carving out new pathways for life



**Public Persona:**

Who do they think I am?



**Contribution:**

Why busy people listen?



**Measures:**

The art of comparison



**Discourses:**

The building blocks of meaning

Consider participating in the weekly calls or the Inquiry Explorations Program and contributing your own Discoveries from the Inquiries report in the 2023 journal. Delve into the unknown with fellow explorers. You'll never know what you discover until you start the exploration.

— Melinda Voss, Editor



# MY VISION FOR FAMILY SPEAKS, CARVING OUT NEW PATHWAYS IN LIFE

VICKI THORPE

Participating in the Inquiry of the Social Commons call, Living as a Created Self: Carving out new pathways for life, had me get present to, see and acknowledge my commitment to the world running in the background of my life and impacting my actions.

Today, with my husband's support and a tablet hanging over my head, I am able to do this paper from my bed while recovering from a spinal injury. Normally, I would be feeling sorry for myself, immersing myself in the mindless watching of some show and being less intrusive to others' lives.

When I feel my life is pathetic, I get on an inquiry call. I hear another's victory and commitment and my own commitment reemerges from the background into my consciousness. That is why I would agree to put my beloved house up for sale so that we could find a suitable place for my in-laws to live with us while they recover from COVID-19.

It emerges again as I do a free seminar with moms to use behavior as a guide instead of a problem, supporting them in having fulfilling relationships with their children.

My commitment pushes through concerns about weather, upset with my sister, COVID-19, travel and has me do a vision board course I created with my niece and her family so they can each support each other in their growth and fulfillment. I traveled a couple hours, staying overnight that was a half-hour away from where I was going even though it wasn't certain it would happen. My commitment won.

Eventually, my in-laws moved out, and we invited my son to move in after he was laid off. He became frustrated, withdrawn, angry and suicidal. My love and commitment had me act instead of reacting. I reached out to my community, got educated and acted from love, my commitment and understanding. He is now more engaged in life, has a job and came tonight with his new girlfriend to say hi before he went out on a date.

My father passed away from COVID-19 just before Thanksgiving. I found myself in family drama. Instead of having the wave of drama overtake me and everyone else, I created the context of grace and enrolled my sister who was in charge of the arrangements in that grace. Miracles happened, the spinning of hurtful stories halted and each person contributed and participated in a way that worked for them.

From grace, my sister planned the viewing, services and streaming that she wanted while everyone participated in a way that worked for them. One brother watched on Zoom with a sister and his stuff in a moving van. At the end, we had a pizza party with many family members interacting for the first time in years.

I notice that having a commitment in the world and participating in the created self inquiry has me let go of expectations and live into a vision that unfolds in unexpected ways each moment of the circumstances of life.



# BRINGING MEASURES TO VISION

ROBYN MAITLAND

I begin my report with an amazing inquiry. Where do the possibilities that I create live? One possible answer is they live in committed actions. At least, this was something I discovered in a recent reading of "Speaking Being: Werner Erhard, Martin Heidegger and a New Possibility of Being Human," by Bruce Hyde and Drew Kopp.

I am inspired that "anything is possible" with actions. This renews my commitment, the original wording of which I framed in a picture on my wall. Invented in a 2012 Landmark inquiry, I asked myself: If I had a magic wand, what would I want for the world? The framed picture reads:

"By 2024, all people will experience themselves as infinite light, works of art and creations of a master designer, the Creator, God as Source where bliss and peace exist."

Since then, I have been looking for opportunities to introduce my commitment in the world. In 2022, to allow my vision to speak, I see that bringing measurement to the vision of my impossible promise fulfilled in the world will make a difference.

Originally, I had the vision of a world where people are aware of their own spiritual magnificence and what that awareness makes possible in manifesting the unimaginable or what the heart most desires. Since 2012, my commitment has expanded in language to include all people and allow that spiritual consciousness may, or may not,

include the language of God.

In living my commitment, I have begun to speak from "I have nothing to offer" in order to allow others to discover in their inquiries what spiritual awareness means for them and what's possible if they have an awareness of the presence beyond the physical.

Has there been a rise in spiritual consciousness in the planet since 2012? What a fun thing to research and this report begins to define the indicators I will track that measure a created vision. A vision of a world spiritually conscious. What could I measure if my commitment was present in the world now?

In the chart on the next page, I outline indicators that I choose to measure representing the vision of my commitment fulfilled. These indicators are not true or make something right, and rather represent the author's view of the possibility and vision of spiritual magnificence in the world. Please note in the time available to develop this report, I have only captured the narrative of the statistical measure.

The language of the narrative statement describes what is happening for that indicator. Further work can be done to do a comparison with numerical data. There is a vision I see of a deeper dive analysis and, perhaps, a paper to develop measuring spiritual consciousness present in human being.

## SPIRITUAL MAGNIFICENCE PRESENT IN ALL HUMAN BEINGS

### Measures for Key Indicators: The Narrative

Indicator	Scorecard Category	Description: Presence in Social Commons	Narrative Summary	Progress (+/-)
Art Presence	Social	Art participation increases. "You are the Art" is present. "People living created lives; living works of art brush stroking their lives." C. Kirtz	New survey findings from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) show gains in arts attendance totals, rates and demographic groups plus sizeable growth in poetry-reading. <sup>1</sup>	+
Spiritual but not Religious	Social	Increased awareness in the spiritual distinct from a religion/religious affiliation.	About a quarter of U.S. adults now say they think of themselves as spiritual but not religious, up eight percentage points in five years, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted between April 25 and June 4 of 2020. <sup>2</sup>	+
Incidence of Suicide	Social	The incidence of suicide would decrease as people who experience magnificence would want every drop of life and would not choose to die.	Suicide is a major public health concern. Suicide is among the leading causes of death in the United States. Based on recent mortality data, suicide in some populations is on the rise. <sup>3</sup>	-
Veganism, Plant-based Diets	Environment	Increased public interest in reducing, if not eliminating, mass animal production for the human diet.	The exact numbers of vegans are almost impossible to establish, but surveys have shown rapid growth. One suggested there had been a 40% increase in 2020, bringing the total to around 1.5 million. <sup>4</sup>	+
Reusable Energy Sources	Environment	Increased use of reusable, sustainable energy sources increase.	Despite the pandemic, the growth rate in the world's renewable energy capacity jumped 45% in 2020, part of "an unprecedented boom" in wind and solar energy, according to a new report from the International Energy Agency. It's the largest annual rate of increase since 1999. <sup>5</sup>	+
Meditation Market	Economic	Increased participation of meditation as both spiritual and mindfulness practices taught in primary school.	Mindfulness-based interventions are increasingly being used as methods to promote psychological well-being of clinical and non-clinical adult populations. <sup>6</sup>	+
Mindfulness Market	Economic	Mindfulness products would rapidly multiply in an emerging market.	The global market for mindfulness meditation apps was valued at \$270 million in 2019 and is expected to reach \$4.2 billion by 2027, growing 41.01% during 2020-2027. <sup>7</sup>	+
Enactment of Local Domestic Laws	Political	Domestic animal cruelty laws are enacted.	The Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act was signed into law in 2019. The law makes some of the most egregious forms of animal cruelty — specifically crushing, burning, drowning, suffocating, impaling or sexual exploitation — in or affecting interstate commerce or within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States a federal crime. <sup>8</sup>	+
International Laws and Agreements Enacted by the United Nations General Assembly	Political	Increase in human rights agreements and climate control measures are enacted and carried out.	As emphasized by the United Nations Human Rights Council in its Resolution 26/27, "Climate change is an urgent global problem requiring a global solution." The council called for international cooperation to implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change "in order to support national efforts for the realization of human rights affected by climate change related impact." <sup>9</sup>	+

There is so much to discover as I have just begun to delve into how you statistically measure and select the indicators for your promise. Also, I am learning, as I considered how to present my report, to choose sources that produce valid and reliable data and ensure your statistical comparisons consider the same criteria. For example, is the narrative talking about a national or international change? In general, the sources I checked within this report were from my country of origin, the United States.

I will end this year's report in wonder. How do you measure a commitment fulfilled in the world? How do you measure the presence of spiritual consciousness? I stand in my commitment that by 2024 all people experience their own magnificence, their connection to the genius human spirit and the artistic expression of that way being in the world.

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# GLITTER!

SEL J. HWAHNG

They say that all that glitters is not gold. True that, because glitter can be silver, pink, blue and green. This is an exploration of why so many of us seem to be naturally attracted to shiny things. How is enrollment already always present in shininess, reflective light and glitter? Why are we so mesmerized by shiny objects? What is the magical quality of this phenomenological experience of glitter?

## BURNING MAN FESTIVAL

Over a decade ago I participated in the Burning Man Festival that took place in the Black Rock desert in Utah.<sup>1</sup> I attended this annual festival five times, almost annually. I was captivated by the nighttime scenery when all the flashing lights would come on, the art cars configured in strange shapes tricked out in neon creeping across the night desert, dayglow colors on people and objects, mirrored interiors inside tents and art installations, and fires glowing and sending smoke and ash up into the cold, dark sky.

Then the culmination at the end of the week of fireworks and immense bonfires resulting from burning down a gigantic male effigy on one night and a large architectural structure the next night.

I recall being enthralled by all the shiny, reflective and glittery things I encountered at night, allowing myself to be drawn to this and that shiny object or reflective surface, seemingly forever distracted, my visual senses drinking it all in. Eventually, I got tired of the heavy drug culture and stopped

participating in the festival. As someone who does not partake in recreational drug or alcohol use (I will take a sip of a celebratory drink now and then just to be polite and part of a group social activity.), I often experienced myself as an anomaly at Burning Man.

## HOLIDAY SEASON

However, what has consistently enthralled me throughout most of my life are the shiny, reflective and glittery objects that seem to permeate the landscape during the Christmas/Hanukkah/Kwanzaa holiday season in December.<sup>2</sup> Although people complain of the crass commercialism of, especially, the Christmas holiday, I am still captivated by glittery and shiny holiday lights and decorations, if they are artistically rendered and somewhat beyond cliché.

Even as I write this in my living room in early January, I am seemingly surrounded by strings of multicolored Christmas lights flickering on and off intertwined with gold and silver weaving through glittery ornaments and sumptuous garlands wrapped around the staircase banisters. The whole setting being visually complemented by the colorful paper of holiday cards carefully arranged alongside a long shelf and the scent of peppermint in the diffuser augmenting this delightful visual experience.

## THE UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATSHIRT

After I returned from the Year-end Vacation

course in early December 2021, I happened to come across an e-mail for a holiday apparel workshop taking place at a visual arts center about an hour from my home. After hemming and hawing for a bit, I chose to surrender to my “inner calling” and experienced myself being taken over—I allowed myself to be used by the world of glitter! At the workshop, I stepped into a holiday craft wonderland. My eyes feasted on the colorful and dazzling ribbons, buttons, patches, beads, baubles and sequins, many of them glittery, shiny and shimmery.

The morning of the workshop I bought a red “ugly Christmas sweatshirt” from Target and wanted to embellish it. This sweatshirt was already adorned with a somewhat garish print of cats-as-reindeer driving Santa’s sled and little bells attached all over the front. I added a ribbon as bowtie, made a string of fake Christmas mini lights that circled the collar, brushed gold glitter glue on the wrist cuffs and ironed and sewed on patches of candy, and my final touch was to sew on a gingerbread man cutout to the upper left sleeve.

I had gotten enrolled into wearing/wanting an ugly Christmas sweater when I attended a Zoom meeting for the graduate student organization to which I belong. (Oh, yes, by the way, although I got my Ph.D. in the humanities at what now seems eons ago, I am now pursuing another master’s degree, this time in a STEM field. That’s science, technology, engineering and math in case you don’t know that term.)

The organization held monthly meetings and, for the December meeting in 2020 (read: first year of the pandemic), we were all encouraged to wear “ugly” Christmas sweaters. I didn’t have one at that time, so I wore Christmas colors instead—a green vest embellished with a red scarf. At the meeting, I was captivated by the array of ugly Christmas sweaters my peers were modeling and ever since then I have wanted one for myself!

Now, back to 2021. I was planning to wear my lovingly – and painstakingly-crafted – creation to the largeish extended family gathering during Christmas 2021. However, that got abruptly cancelled when the host and three other family members suddenly tested positive for the COVID-19 virus (thanks, Omicron). So, instead,



I wore it to some much smaller post-Christmas outdoor meet-and-greets with friends and family that were of short duration and deemed much more COVID-19-safe than an indoor gathering.

Lucky for me, my housemate is a Serbian immigrant, and the Serbs do not celebrate Christmas in late December but actually in early January! (Something to do with their Eastern Orthodox religion ...) So I planned a smallish indoor gathering with my housemate, her partner and a couple other friends. As “good” and responsible public health-aware citizens, we all tested for COVID-19 using at-home antigen tests a couple hours before we agreed to meet lol. Yes, we all tested negative. So, finally, I got to show off my ugly Christmas sweatshirt creation at an actual Christmas gathering that included eating scrumptious homemade Serbian holiday food that my housemate masterfully prepared. (Thanks, housemate!)

## CONCLUSION

So how is it that we don’t celebrate life and living

all the time? Why is it that for many of us the season of abundant celebration only happens once a year and, at most, takes place during a paltry 8% of our whole calendar year?<sup>3</sup> How is it that we have normalized an “impoverishment of celebration” in our day-to-day lives in which drabness and mediocrity reign? Dull. Dreary. Desolate. What will it take to celebrate life constantly and continuously—sprinkled through and through with glitter—that allows vision to speak?

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 See [www.burningman.org](http://www.burningman.org)
- 2 There may be other religious holidays not written here that also occur in December.
- 3 8% is approximately one month out of the calendar year.



# WHILE MY VISION GENTLY SHRIEKS

(With appropriate nods to Samuel Clemens, Ted Geisel and the quiet Beatle)

GEOFFREY WHEELER

Just when I discovered there was more *there there* to listening, Landmark's Imp-in-Residence, Brian Regnier, along with Tobin White, Owen Coffey and True Shields tossed me a curveball.<sup>1</sup>

*Allow* my vision to speak? How can I shut up long enough for that to occur? As Shields and Coffey wrote in the Call for Papers to the 2021 Conference for Global Transformation, "Perhaps you, or it, have hit pause." *Hit* pause? I've worked in television and with machines for more than 50 years. I know damn well what happens when pause is hit.

Technology has advanced in that time to allow a machine to time out if nothing interrupts the normal operation of said machine. This machine – my very own personal "It," a tube in a skin bag topped off with a sponge of gray matter and plaque – not only hit pause but squatted squarely on the button over six years ago.

To be fair, I began the squat years earlier, but, yeah, let's put a stick in the ground and say it was 2015. It's only recently that I've allowed myself to speak truth to self regarding what's so in my life.

The tools offered by the Wisdom Course Area of Landmark are useful in examining "now," that cavernous point in time which exists in each moment.<sup>2</sup> The Partnership Explorations course blew the doors off of what I knew to be "true" about my community, the people and resources that give my life and the walls and silos I've erected over the years to keep them in their place.<sup>3</sup>

After that was distinguished, the conversations of the Social Commons and Inquiry Explorations Program have allowed for an expansion of what's available in listening and speaking as a

contribution regarding my promise to, and for, the world: *To provoke thought and compassion through complete communication.*<sup>4</sup>

Participating in various conversations with people around the planet whose lives seem nothing like mine, on one level or other, continues to show me just how ordinary, and *extraordinary*, humans are in the context of that promise. The more I notice that, the more I recognize that my next steps in fulfilling on the promise involve speaking less (some might say *much* less) and filling that space and time with more listening.

I have both an aversion to, and affinity for, quantitative analysis, at once fascinated by numbers, measurement and probable outcomes, yet insisting that what I do or say has worth beyond measure. Such conceit! A ready-made limitation to growth and development which allows me to fool myself into thinking I'm advancing and fulfilling on my promise to an undoubtedly grateful world. (Seeing that in writing makes me wonder how I can live with myself, but that's an entirely different conversation.)

Enrollment and membership in a community created by my promise, however, can give me a meaningful indication of the fulfillment of the promise. Relevant measures could include: Was the promise successfully recreated; did membership increase; and have the boundaries of community expanded within me or without me?

Someone suggested to me, while working on this report, that I try my hand at poetry to communicate my thoughts on the matter of my vision. You may disagree, but it worked to funnel my thoughts regarding this year's conversation.

Our work involves inquiry;  
     peeling onions is easier,  
 The deeper one goes  
     can make one feel queasier.  
 Fulfillment reports,  
     they say, are sublime;  
 If that's so, I'm sure,  
     nobody's read mine.  
 As Measures they show us  
     how far we have gone;  
 In crafting a promise to live on and on.  
 Of Discourse, it's said,  
     that it helps to give meaning.  
 Built block upon block;  
     watch out there, it's leaning!  
 This way and that way,  
     throughout all the ages.  
 And, just like conversing,  
     it passes through stages.  
 'Twas writ on a Post-It,  
     which some call a sticky,  
 "Use humor for good!"  
     felt, at first, a bit icky.  
 Then I looked deeper;  
     it seemed to make sense.  
 To some folks my humor occurs as intense.  
 A journey began;  
     and I crafted commitment.  
 Though, often,  
     I find I've forgotten what it meant.  
 "To provoke thought and action"  
     is useful enough;  
 But "complete communication"  
     sometimes can be rough.  
 Much has been made of  
     The Tower of Babel;  
 These days many voices  
     are rousing the rabble.  
 Twain and some others  
     foretold of such days;

When people would parrot  
     and the pendulum sways.  
 So, what do I do  
     when my vision, it speaks?  
 Dash hither and yon,  
     oiling each bubble and squeak?  
 Balderdash!  
     That's much too much work  
 And, clearly, I've mastered  
     coming off as a jerk.  
 If the passing of Brian,  
     Tom D and the others,  
 Shows me the value  
     of sisters and brothers;  
 "Completion" ain't final,  
     they live in our heart.  
 Informing our speaking,  
     list'ning and art;  
 Giving others who follow  
     a fine, grand head start.<sup>2</sup>

Discussing the vision of a promise to, and for, the world, or of vision itself, naturally turns to focus. In allowing that *vision* to speak, attention and vigilance are required. Allowing distraction to divert attention is a sure sign that listening and speaking is challenged or, perhaps, that commitment to the promise isn't present.

This is not to say we should ignore anything that doesn't "fit in" to a commitment, just that attention must be paid when we allow the beauty of a sunrise or sunset to occupy our thoughts. If we're wise enough to notice that, we can easily return to any conversation of which we're a part. In life, so far, much of my attention has been on everything but my promise. More precisely, the monologue is (and many of my dialogues are) all about what's not consistent with my vision.

As demonstrated in The Landmark Forum and elsewhere, such a conversation can be useful in demonstrating how to describe a pencil. At some point, however, once the description is agreed upon, it's time to "put down the pencil" and get on with what actions are next, in fulfillment of

a promise. It's the inherent paradox of "all of it," being aware of something versus being afraid of missing something. Surrendering to, or allowing for, the notion that we can't know it all and knowing that "all of it" changes in each moment is a large part of the growth and development of Self.

This was part of the year-end web event, diving deeper into "allowing." Discovering that letting things be, as they are and aren't, leaves a lot more energy to devote to fulfilling a promise. Allowing others to contribute rather than wasting time arguing with them or, even worse, arguing with reality, provides even more time, space and energy for directly supporting commitments, promises and vision.

A very wise Wisdom course leader is fond of saying, "If you wanna know what you're committed to, look at your feet." While mine are a size 15 and hard to miss, it's easy to misinterpret the point. While there's *mild* interest in all I see, there's little in view that supports my promise. If all of life is given in conversation, there's no great value in a string of *non sequiturs*.

In the coming year, the discovery of what's possible in surrendering to the ongoing listening and speaking of my vision can unfold the next steps of accomplishment. With all of the discoveries of years past, using all my resources in ways I know to do and ways yet to be revealed, I'm committing anew to the ongoing fulfillment of my promise: *To provoke thought and compassion through complete communication*. All that remains is to take the steps. Not knowing how it turns out is transformed to bliss, and next year's report will echo that starfish parable, my actions made a difference to one.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Brian Regnier, who died in 2021, created the Wisdom Unlimited course and all the programs that emerged from it. Tobin White develops and leads courses in the Wisdom Course Area. Owen Coffey is a consultant in the Wisdom Course Area and True Shields received the best paper award during the 2021 Conference for Global Transformation.
- 2 Tom Davidson participated in Landmark beginning in the early 1970s and was a stalwart of the Wisdom community in the midwestern part of the U.S. He continued his support of the leader body and the conference until his death in 2021.



# SPEAKING A VISION OF HEALTH AND FREEDOM FOR MY COMMUNITY

RACHEL BARWELL

I live in New Zealand, a small, beautiful country near the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, renowned for its world-class rugby team, Lord of the Rings movies and, until last year, a history of moderate democratic traditions.

During the 2020 Conference for Global Transformation, I created my commitment for the world: “A safe and healthy climate for All,” inside my climate action commitments. In the ensuing 18 months, I have discovered that the word “*climate*” extends beyond the physical realm to include conversational spaces, both intimate and public.

As a participant in a number of Wisdom Course Area programs since, I have learned to listen for others’ commitments, for authenticity, possibility, enrollment and the future. I have learned to speak my climate action commitments in a way that I hope now seem to land as enrolling (as opposed to righteous). A listening for climate advocacy has evolved in the past 18 months in my community and country, and I am encouraged by the number of Wisdom graduates who now lead or participate in environmental and/or climate action projects. I have become involved in three climate advocacy or leadership teams, one here in my community of *Kāpiti* Coast, New Zealand, and two in southern Africa.

What I want to share about, however, is my more recent journey in becoming an advocate for the restoration of democracy and civil rights in my country, and what I am discovering about speaking my vision of all people being healthy and free into an environment of currently little or limited agreement.

My country of five million people has been blessed

by very few COVID-19 deaths (<50), largely due to being a small, isolated island state near the bottom of the Pacific, strong border control policies and a rapid governmental response in early 2020. For that blessing, I am, and I believe all New Zealanders are, extremely grateful.

In November 2021, vaccinations for COVID-19 were mandated for four key industries– that is, “no jab, no job.” There are virtually no medical or religious exemptions permitted to the mandates, regardless of people’s underlying health conditions. Under the government’s Traffic Light System introduced on Dec. 5, those who have been unable or have chosen not to take the vaccines have been barred from their workplaces, employment, libraries, swimming pools, cafes, restaurants, sports teams and clubs, personal services, holiday accommodations, campgrounds, community groups and most public events.

Many thousands of people have been fired from their jobs in education, police, corrections, health and aged care and hospitality for choosing not to be vaccinated.

A digital vaccine pass system was introduced in December. The pass needs to be renewed every four-to-six months, documenting new “booster” vaccinations. Teenagers and now children aged 5-11 are being vaccinated, often without their parents’ consent. Our indigenous populations are being offered eye-watering inducements or incentives to become vaccinated, or to see to it that members of their *iwi* (tribes) and *whānau* (extended families) become vaccinated. Concurrently, the mainstream media only reports the official government narrative and has actively participated

in the vilification and defamation of medical professionals who dared to speak out against the vaccine mandates or for highlighting the mounting cases of adverse reactions following vaccinations.

In mid-November, I realized that my country was on a slippery slope toward medical apartheid when all existing medical exemptions to the vaccines were revoked by the government, including those for pregnant women and people susceptible to anaphylactic shock and other pre-existing medical conditions, of which I have one.

In early December, I became actively involved with local citizens' groups, leading a delegation to our local mayor, seeking practical solutions to allow *all* members of our community, regardless of vaccination status, access to council facilities, such as pools, libraries and galleries. We also invited the mayor and his council to show leadership to discourage discrimination and divisiveness within our community and provide support and practical solutions for our businesses and wider community. More than 900 letters were sent to the council, outlining the impacts of the mandates on businesses, schools, sports clubs, the elderly, youth, children and families.

To date, progress with the mayor and council has been underwhelming. While a community meeting was promised by the mayor before Christmas, the latest communication from his office indicates that he and his council officers and staff are "simply following central government advice and rules," given that they are the authorities in these matters.

While this latest communication is very disappointing for our community, and I remain very concerned for the future of democracy and unity here, I want to share about what I am learning inside of having a commitment to health and freedom for all fulfilled in the world.

I have discovered:

- There is a time for listening to others' perspectives and points of view, to seek openings for creating conversations for what's possible.
- There is a time for straight, direct talk, to call out inconsistencies and point to what is happening in reality.

- How to find the courage to call out officials in authority on inconsistencies and discrimination in their policies.
- Seeking common commitments and common ground is a great starting point for building stronger communities.
- Communities are incredibly resilient, and when we come together over matters of true import, people's passions, creativity and compassion can carry groups forward in ways that don't show up under ordinary circumstances.
- My community is full of intelligent, inquiring, committed, talented and resourceful people – some of them even reside on my street or immediate neighborhood!
- Bringing people together to create, debate and organize community actions takes something in communication – a willingness to listen to all points of view, seek consensus, keep the action moving forward, give time to listen deeply to people's upsets, losses and grief and remain focused, yet inclusive, in discussions.
- The importance of regular connection, support and laughter when people are dealing with immense challenges in their families, businesses and communities.
- Fundamentally, people want to create futures where they, their families, their businesses and communities are well, safe and thriving, free from unwarranted interference and constraints.

Over Christmas, my eldest stepson and his wife had their first child – a happy and beautiful little boy. In being with the three of them last weekend, I was reminded of the sweetness of new life – how precious it is, what immense possibilities live within my young grandson and his parents and the life they wish to create for their family. I got present to my commitment for future generations everywhere to live healthy, free and full lives.

I don't know where this current advocacy journey will take me, my wonderful community of *Kāpiti* and my beautiful country, but I am standing powerfully for a world where **all** people are safe, healthy and free to pursue their dreams and visions for their families, their lives and their communities.



# THE MASTERWORK OF A VIRUS

KATHY FEDORI

*The allegory that follows could open inquiry on the astonishing space of allowing our interconnectedness and vision to speak.*

## A STORY

Once upon a time there was a virus that tried to resist humans, but they were irresistible. That virus, known as COVID-19, had very few boundaries and many diverse expressions.

COVID-19 wanted to embrace the world and all 7.9 billion human beings. Everyone. On the road to touching someone, the virus was lured into a space where every touch was too strong, like a horror story.

The COVID-19 virus found that with every landing on a human being, they got ill ... or died. It became quite scary, and the virus feared what it had become, so it mutated over and over. Good and evil became blurred. Temptation took COVID-19 into a frenzy of spattering poison without societal restraints. COVID-19 became a global assassin.

People were so afraid. Most locked their doors, grabbed protective shields and got injected with vaccines. Others defied the virus and exposed themselves claiming freewill was more important than immunity. There was isolation and lost opportunities ... and people just enduring a lot.

Then a lot changed. Zoom screens lit up. The path of destruction allowed stories and visions to be told over and over again in the urgency to find a way to stop COVID-19 from spreading. The art of inquiry blossomed as interconnected global conversations became as common as brushing

your teeth. We grew attached, six feet apart and across oceans, in inquiry.

What COVID-19 couldn't predict was that emotional intricacy would open the door to discovering who we are together. One conversation after another became a discourse. The virus realized it didn't stand a chance in this powerful community conversation that embraced diversity and healing. An illuminated space of human dignity, respect and love was the bright light strong enough to burn out the threat.

Inadvertently, COVID-19 had become a catalyst for a new realization and conversation about being human ... talk that would not have evolved without the virus. Talk *at* each other transformed to talk *to* each other.

Could this mean our evolution depends on COVID-19? Where do we go now?

## EPILOGUE

Time passes. The planet is shaken and tossed. As suddenly as COVID-19 appears, it exits the scene, simply stunned and snuffed out by the powerful connection of each human rendezvous. No answers, explanation or solutions. Just many spectacular healthy lives ... sealed with each breath ... together. Unexpected. Powerful and priceless. Surprisingly lasting.

What will I tell my grandchildren about COVID-19? I'll skip the story of its brutal attack and shine a light on the days I'm thankful for as the world turned inside out to find the source of who we really are.

Those were days of discovering that listening

to the possibilities of a community could build a new universe of love, understanding and transformation.

Days where I changed radically from looking inside to expanding my heart to my commitment for humanity. My commitment is that everyone has a spectacular life to the very, very, very last breath! The grandchildren will laugh and continue as though it couldn't have been possible to have life any other way as their world is that thrillingly alive best picture.

*In the moments before an Inquiries of the Social Commons call, as a custodian on the call, I dive into an inquiry with my colleagues on what I am curious about and what has appeared that week. A question emerges and I share it with the explorers and wonderers on the call. I have discovered that the question is the access to a new type of bonding.*

*What I see emerging, on the Zoom inquiries, is a "community think." Our commitment for the world is access to believing in who we really are together. Every week, I fall in love with the unparalleled ability of all the participants to embrace the breathless possibility of being in comfortable conversation that could make history. There is a new, safe space of creating inquiry without the usual answers, with space to allow vision to speak. That's the miracle.*



# REGISTERING ACCOMPLISHMENT: ON THE ROAD TO LISTENING – THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

CHRIS KIRTZ

Readers of past conference journals will recognize this as a Report from the Field regarding this calendar year's growth in listening since last year's conference.

Last year, my commitment was: "Listening such that people were empowered to claim themselves as authors, creators and source of life and listening."

My practice was: "Listening to the end with 'nothing' to offer."

What a difference a year makes!

Now, my commitment is: "Creating listening environments where people discover themselves as authors, creators and sources of their lives and listening, and they 'allow their visions to speak' and their 'hearts to sing as one expanding world-community heart.'"

Now my practice is: "Listening as one world-expanding community heart."

What happened? Inquiry happened!

As the late Brian Regnier, a retired Landmark Forum leader and founder of the Wisdom Course Area, posited: "Inquiry is an access to the immediate transformation of reality."

Really? How so?

So, because in inquiry, we park or "bracket" what we think we know, and especially what we are absolutely sure we know, we find we have a capacity to "look" and "discover."

When we identify the capacity to "look" and "discover," magic happens.

Standing in not knowing, "nothing" and "child-like" wonder creates the space to identify we have the power to recognize and develop our looking and discovering muscle.

Discoveries via looking and discovering are exponential and paradigm-shifting. Instantaneously, we see with new eyes what has never been available before. Heretofore seeming impossibilities become obvious and often quite simple.

By way of contrast, normal learning is incremental. We add a new piece of information and see how it does, or does not, fit in our "existing wall of knowledge." It adds to, and builds upon, what is already there. Though useful, it's hardly ever earth-shattering.

Standing in inquiry, or more accurately put – intentionally constituting as "wonder" and not knowing – along came True Shield's Call for Papers for the 2022 conference – "Allowing Vision to Speak."

Literally, not figuratively, I was rocked back in my chair – my breath automatically released itself – and I settled back comfortably and relaxed. The whole of "allowing vision to speak" took me over, infused me and altered my molecules.

A palatable shift at the level of being occurred and has continued to grow ever since.

As life went on in this new state of being, "allowing vision to speak" evolved to include "having hearts sing."

At first, it was "other's" hearts, then it was "my" heart and "their" heart, and then, *one heart* – no longer any me, them, even beyond our or us – one

expanding community heart.

From there, everything shifted again. Now, instead of being cranky and making folks for whom I was accountable wrong for not being in communication, I found my heart aching for theirs (ours) – surmising they likely felt embarrassed and ashamed for not keeping agreements and going out of communication.

My “heart” actions have been to reach out creating atmospheres where they are empowered to be in communication, recognize what they did and did not do, acknowledge “what’s so” and, with integrity restored, be “free to be and free to act.”

So, what do I get out of living from, in and as inquiry?

Nothing much.

Just my life!

Just the ability to grow ongoingly as an “adult in training and development for life” to fulfill my commitment to, and for, a “world that works for everyone with no one and nothing left out.”



# WHAT'S NEXT WHEN THERE IS NO VISION TO SPEAK

PAT NOLIN

I have an obsession. It began in 2021, or even before that. But, since last year in January, I was able to say for the first time: I can retire “next” year. Indeed, this May, I will be one year older. And, then, I will have a ticket for my next big step: the life of a retiree.

In preparation, over time, I took a lot of courses, training and vacations to make sure I won't have a boring retirement like my father. I spent the last 20 years living inside of that context, fearing that moment: *the retirement*. For all I know, he might have had a blast during his retirement. But that surely didn't occur to me like it.

One activity that I took on last year was the Aspiring Custodian Training. I told myself: Wow, 10 weeks of practicing listening. What an opportunity! A couple of months later when I was asked to become a custodian, I said yes! Since the beginning of that journey, through the training and my participation on the calls of the Inquiries of the Social Commons, my obsession faded and ultimately disappeared.

But, I'm still left with the same question: What's next?

I don't know what's next. I don't know how this new phase of my life will look. Of course, I have hints and clues, but I don't have a vision. So, now the question is: What's next when there is no vision? Am I in trouble? The theme of this year's conference is: “Allowing your vision to speak.” How ironic it is. Isn't it?

How can I allow my vision to speak? When I was a teenager, it seemed as though my vision was clear about my future: what to study, get a good

job, house, companion, travel, etc. Now that I accomplished it ... what vision can I create or allow to emerge? At last year's conference, a speaker said: Find your passion, and, if you don't have one, find someone who has one. I was happy to settle for that. Not so much anymore.

Regarding allowing my vision to speak, the best structures I have right now are my participation in Landmark's programs and exploring what's next with the people in my life. I'm one of the custodians who hosts the inquiry, Living as a Created Self: Carving out new pathways for life. It's a really good place to be when you have a blank space in front of you.

Instead of focusing on my preoccupations, I focus on the people who come and join us in the inquiry. By being the space for their journey, I contribute to them and they contribute to me. It's living inside of the distinction “custodian,” and to be a space so other people can explore what matters to them. Often during those inquiries, there is someone inquiring about something that also matters to me.

Being part of a team of senior inquirers supports me in that exploration. I feel like Bilbo, the Hobbit (from J. R. R. Tolkien's 1937 novel “The Hobbit”), on his quest to the lonely mountain to recover the dwarf's treasure guarded by a monstrous dragon. It's so powerful to be in an inquiry with friends and family instead of being obsessed alone. Every week, I look at how I can create myself newly so I can create that new life. It became the practice and muscle I can develop slowly.

I don't know what will be the result, and a new feeling is emerging. Does it really matter? Do

I really need to know what will be next before jumping? The next thought is: Have faith, have faith in the all of it and jump.

Inquiring is a new discovery for me. It seems that since I began my courses in Landmark, the distinctions I needed always arrived at the right time: contribution, completing, games, integrity, upgrading, empowerment and, now, inquiry. Maybe the “what’s next” is not something to do, but someone to be. I’m really good at doing something, and the Wisdom Unlimited course was the first step to look at “being” something. To go from completing the past to create myself in a future that doesn’t exist.

I transform myself along with the participants of the calls, being inspired and fueled by their discoveries. Every week, I come to know them a little bit more, as if I was a new member of that family. Like a ripple effect, someone’s breakthrough can become my next inquiry. And, each time, I get closer to my goal, which holds many promises and mysteries.

The eagerness is gone, I can enjoy the ride, savor the scenery along the journey, wandering to sites I wouldn’t have expected, discovering new people and places, and discovering anew old people and places. Perhaps, for someone like me who is always on the go, allowing the vision to speak is dwelling in the same place for a while, listening to what my heart aspires about what’s next for a little bit longer.

Maybe finding what’s next is overrated. After all, as that famous Ralph Waldo Emerson’s quote says: “Life is a journey, not a destination.”



# THE BIRTH OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN ROUNDTABLE

ARIELA MARSHALL

The commitment I live inside of is: "Beginning with you and me, a world where there is room for everyone, everyone has a voice and a seat at the table and is on the dance floor of their life, bearing witness to each other, listening to the end, talking to strangers and being a resource for love."

Out of this commitment and the words of two wise men:

"We won't fulfill on our commitments to the world unless the people you consider the 'opposition' join you," Tobin White, a Landmark leader, said.

"Talk and engage with the fringes, the parts of our community that think differently than we do," said the late Brian Regnier, a Landmark leader who died in December 2021.

With this as my inspiration that we can build bridges rather than erect walls with the people around us, the Israeli-Palestinian Roundtable was born. As a custodian for the Inquiries of the Social Commons and someone who is striving to become recognized, sought after and in demand as a person of extraordinary contribution, the Israeli-Palestinian Roundtable is a game worth playing.<sup>1</sup>

Come with me back to the beginning where it all began. I was at a Zoom meeting "Israeli and Us" on April 11, 2021, and we were inquiring about how we all respond in diverse ways, reflective of our different, often complex, relationships



and viewpoints about this topic. I was amazed at how much there was for me to learn about the Palestinian side of the situation.

My father, who was born in Palestine (before Israel became a state in 1948) and fought for its statehood before coming to the U.S. with one of the first passports issued by the new nation of Israel to pursue an education, I thought that I knew Israel. Yes, I knew Israel, the land of my father's birth, the land of my aunts, uncles and cousins and the land I visited twice leaving me with fond, sweet memories.

But that day I learned that was only part of the picture. I realized what I didn't know was about the Palestinians. A subject that never came up in conversation at home. It was at that moment, through two skillful moderators guiding us through a complex and tender inquiry, I realized the vast amount I didn't know I didn't know about that topic. I came out of that discussion a different human being, molecules rearranged.

Immediately, I thought back to Regnier's and White's wise words and what I got from

participating on the **Public Persona** inquiry call – Who do others say I am; the **Contribution** inquiry call – What contribution will I make in the world?; the **Measures** inquiry call – How do I measure this?; and the **Living as a Created Self** inquiry call – How do I get to carve and create my life newly and ongoingly, that I had the idea for the Israeli-Palestinian Roundtable.

Since then, I have joined numerous Facebook groups, added numerous friends, both Israeli and Palestinian, all with a commitment to Israeli-Palestinian peace, and I have become part of a Sufi Meetup group that meets monthly. I am taking on:

1. Every conversation is an inquiry, parking what I know and think I know and just looking
2. Listening to the end and for the gold
3. Bearing witness in every conversation without judgment
4. Making space for all of it.

Allowing my vision to speak is to ongoingly create occasions when Israelis and Palestinians can come together to engage and forward conversations of the things that are important to all of us, through inquiry, art, music, food, literature, exchange of ideas to build friendships and alliances and build bridges rather than erect walls with nobody and no idea left out.

I am embarking on a journey. As Lao Tzu, a Chinese philosopher, once said, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” The Israeli-Palestinian Roundtable is the first step in an incredible journey toward understanding, inclusion and eventually peace.

I realize this is a huge undertaking. I’m using a skill that I obtained from the Partnership Explorations course, which is being OK in the unknown, leaving sight of the shore and all that is familiar to us, charting, carving and creating a path not gone down before.<sup>2</sup>

Granting space and allowing for the unknown to just be, just as it is and just as it isn’t. I realize this path needs a new field of communication, namely

what we call in the Partnership course, The Fifth Field. In that field, what I say and do empowers others and what they say and do empowers me.

Bringing this field to the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue will generate unpredictable results and go a long way toward building bridges between Israelis and Palestinians in a way that will be unrecognizable.

I challenge each one of you to take on something that will shift you at your core being and make you unrecognizable not only to yourself but to your originating circle, community and the world. Be that person who wakes up each day with a promise you are living your life inside of that touches, moves and inspires you to take on your day, face the unknown, create opportunities for you to speak your authentic voice and create a world where everyone has a seat at the table and is on the dance floor of their lives with no one left out.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The Inquiries of the Social Commons are weekly calls on such subjects as contribution, measures, public persona, discourses, living as a created self and the social commons.
- 2 Partnership Explorations is a year-long Landmark course that includes six weekends.



# MY THREE-YEAR JOURNEY TO CREATING MY IMPOSSIBLE PROMISE FOR THE WORLD

LINDA QBQ RUSSELL

Where to start: May 2019 Conference for Global Transformation. Loew's Hollywood, the site of the conference as a first-time participant.

A whirlwind of activities and "out-here" conversations with transformed humans and their possibilities. Fun, play and ease. My mind enjoying all I am hearing, seeing, experiencing and *being*.

I'm offered a free course valued at \$5,000 called the Inquiry Explorations Program by paying the 2020 conference registration before the conference weekend ends. That course began in July 2019. I was introduced to the 55-minute Social Commons calls provided during the week via Zoom.

I started participating in the Measures call at 8 a.m. Pacific time. Chris Kirtz was a custodian host. My first exposure to people's commitments to and/or promises for the world. Hmmm. I do not have one. What is that?

Kirtz and other participants said, "Ask yourself, what is important to me?" Good question. What is important? To me? I will have to think about it.

I took The Landmark Forum in 2011. My biggest breakthrough since has been my radical shift around my "right-wrong, good-bad" thinking during the Integrity seminar. I learned to replace it with "workable, not workable." I realized that I wanted to create my impossible promise around this idea.

I began with

1. My promise is **giving up** being "right-wrong, good-bad" in favor of "workable, not workable."

I did not like "giving up" and exchanged it for

2. My promise is **laying aside** being "right-wrong, good-bad" in favor of "workable, not workable."

I attended the Measures call and kept exploring my promise. To be authentic, I cannot remember all the iterations of my promise, just that I experienced so many ideas as I inquired every week regarding my promise. I used the online fulfillment report to track how my promise kept shifting and found my completed fulfillment reports helpful.

A recent shift I made was to remove "Play a fun game," leaving just,

3. My promise to the world is shifting the "right-wrong, good-bad" story to workability free of judgment.

Then I thought that will not work. I want to play a fun game first to create a *space* for the possibility that we shift the "right-wrong, good-bad" story to workability free of judgment.

This has been a wonder-full, full-of-wonder journey of looking and discovering what is important to

me. I enjoy having fun conversations about my promise and your promise; my life, your life; my ways of being, your ways of being; our wisdom, partnership, our originating circles and our world. Begin now.

4. My promise to the world is: "Playing a fun game creating a *space* and *possibilities* to shift our 'right-wrong, good-bad' stories to a world of workability free of judgment by 2029."

Begin now. I continue my journey. Begin now.



# REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Just as Landmark graduates span the globe, their Reports from the Field cover a lot of territory. Contributors write about what's unfolded for them during the last year in who they're being, what they're up to and what's important to them. In any case, the reports offer fascinating word pictures and glimpses into the worlds of others.

Sometimes, reports are intensely personal. One contributor recounts a moving experience taking care of her father during his last days. Two others embark on outdoor adventures, one visiting penguins on one of the sub-Antarctic islands in the Southern Ocean and the other visiting 19 trees in Devon, England, near his home and subsequently presenting a slideshow for his community club about what led to these trees being special.

Others recount their internal journeys – being in relationship with an unvaccinated son, getting stopped by a need to be perfect, treating COVID-19 patients and signing an ungodly number of death certificates, settling into retirement and spending 30 years studying and exploring nature, among others.

Other contributors reported on the impact of Landmark's courses and programs on their lives, whether that was attending the Conference for Global Transformation for the first time or participating in the Wisdom Unlimited for the Arts course.

Overall, this section contains many juicy reports that are there to be savored. May they also serve as inspiration for you to contribute a Report from the Field for the 2023 journal. Why not? As they say in seminars and programs: Share. Share. Share.

— Melinda Voss, Editor



# ALLOWING A VISION FOR WILD PLACES TO SPEAK

AMRIT KENDRICK

Since 1983 I have been engaged in a partnership for possibility with my husband, Gary. He has always loved the sea and the organisms which live there. He grew up in Western Australia on the Indian Ocean and got his scuba license at age 15.

He was the first person in his family to go to university, thanks largely to an Australian government policy of free tertiary education for all from 1974 to 1989. After finishing his bachelor's degree, he traveled and worked in varied settings. By 1982, he knew that he wanted to be a marine plant ecologist and, by 1987, he knew he wanted to do a Ph.D.

Gary had a vision for leading a research team. His early work focused on seaweeds but then he moved into discovering a range of ecological matters in relation to seagrasses. Alongside him the whole time I have gotten to empower and allow this vision to be fulfilled. What an honor!

Now a professor, Gary has mentored many students through their own Ph.D.'s and is known for his blatant enthusiasm about marine plants and the habitats they provide. Whether speaking to university staff or community groups, he excites people about these incredible organisms.

A big part of my life has looked like this: I slide my wetsuit on, pull the hood over my head, grab the fins and mask and snorkel and head for the edge of the water. This is a structural sentence for me, well-practiced. Less-experienced companions seem to take ages, fussing and fiddling with their

layers of neoprene, making a conscious effort to spit into their masks so the saliva will prevent fogging and trying to work out whether they should put their fins on their feet before they enter the water or after they've gone in. I just get in as fast as I can, as Gary does.

More than 30 years of donning gear and jumping into seawater cold or warm has trained me to do this transition almost automatically from land to sea person. I've swum and gazed through the mask in cold Pacific Ocean waters, warm China Sea waters and refreshing Indian Ocean waters.

I've floated and kicked in the Leeuwin Current, Georgia Strait, Equatorial Current, Swan River Estuary and Mediterranean. What I've seen, at times, has been dazzling. I've witnessed cuttlefish in mating displays stroking each other's tentacles and modulating their colors. I've watched stingrays of various sizes emerge from sand or out of the murk, gliding beneath me, astounding in their speed and grace.

I've peered beneath reef ledges to observe crayfish antennae and schools of tiny fish. I've looked on as "cleaner" fish nibble the parasites off the larger species. At night, I've gone underwater and been delighted with a dark world not at all like the daytime scenario. Turning off the flashlight, I've been gobsmacked by the beauty of phosphorescence—greenish white sparks of light occurring like a multiverse of biological stars actually consisting of several types of plankton, microscopic plants and animals.

Then there's "the backdrop"—that is what we have really come to look at. We're not examining the dancers and singers, fauna in their fancy costumes. We're looking at and aiming to understand the scenery on the stage set. Most people perceive it as green stuff in the background. I've looked at marine plant communities composed of plants of many sizes, the turf algae, big golden brown kelp, dainty red algae, plentiful green algae and meadows of seagrasses. Instead of viewing it as only a background and place for the main players to camouflage themselves, I have gotten acquainted with the lives of these vegetative organisms which photosynthesize and provide food as well as structural shelter for the fish and invertebrates.

From a simplified view, people refer to the plants of the marine realm as "the greens, the browns and the reds." A few people remember to mention the seagrasses. Seagrasses are distinct from seaweeds in that they flower. Seagrass moved back into the sea from land 100 million years ago. In much of the world, there is only one local species, *e.g.*, in Chesapeake Bay on the eastern seaboard of the United States, there is *Zostera marina*. In the eastern Indian Ocean, we have 27 species. Unlike seagrass, the seaweed or algae are in the group "protista" and they have very different methods of reproduction not involving flowering or seeds.

Over Gary's early career, he examined several species of algae up close. I provided field assistance during a visit to Shark Bay, a World Heritage Site 800 kilometers (nearly 500 miles) north of Perth on the westernmost point of the Australian continent. Examining green algae in greater detail there, he showed how some grow epiphytically on seagrass and during part of the year will block the light and absorb the nutrients around the seagrass meadow. (Epiphytically means one plant growing on another plant.)

He studied a red alga in British Columbia, Canada, which grows "epiphytically" on other algae and showed that it reproduced every 20 days no matter the season. In his study of *Sargassum*, a brown alga at Rottnest Island in Western Australia, Gary found each plant produced hundreds of millions of propagules (the name for fertilized eggs of all algae) every year which resettled, while the adult plants break off at the base and drift off.

In a Galapagos Island bay, he examined growth of several types of algae growing in an environment rich in nutrients and pollutants distinct from the pristine environment in surrounding bays.

After completing his own student work, Gary began to guide others. One of Gary's graduate students looked more closely at a red alga in a group called the corallines. She got carbon dating done on the coralline rhodoliths, which she found rolling around on the sea bottom at 38 meters (about 125 feet) of depth and discovered they were 700-1,000 years old.

Another of Gary's students looked at a brown alga and studied how kelp survives in deeper protected places or refugia, which stay cooler while the kelps, which used to thrive near the surface, disappear due to heat. Also, he has always enjoyed looking at ecological stories at different scales, and in another student's study that looked at the environmental cues which determine the mix of seagrasses growing together in a seagrass meadow around islands in the South China Sea.

In this day and age, much emphasis is on carbon. How much carbon is held in the earth by a plant community? How much gets released when we destroy that plant community? One current idea is called "blue carbon" – the carbon held out of the atmosphere by marine plants, including marshes, mangroves, seaweeds and seagrasses.

In the present day, when your vision is to have marine plant communities thriving, what else is part of that? First, the human community needs to gain a better understanding of how these plants support our activities, including fishing. Gary is now unfolding this part of the vision and involving fishing groups in reseeding seagrass meadows which have begun to disappear due to mooring boats or dredging.

There is also a call for communities to be aware of other impacts, such as the warming of the planet. As it is now a given that marine heat waves will happen, there will be consequences. A warming ocean bleaches coral, and it also kills seaweeds and seagrasses.

Defoliation of a plant community due to above normal water temperature has impacts on those animals that eat seagrass, such as dugongs,

manatees and sea turtles. It also reduces the places for hiding and much prey disappears, so fish, sea snakes and other invertebrates cannot survive. Keeping an eye on these impacts and doing a part in assisting the seagrass meadows to recover is now becoming important to Indigenous sea country people in Western Australia. Gary and his team of researchers are facilitating two-way knowledge transfer and restoration of seagrass meadows.

Forty years of allowing this vision to speak has been a joyful and amazing ride of discovery.

# ALLOWING VISION TO UNFOLD

SUSAN KRALJ

When I offered to help Sarah Thomas with her project of putting on the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership courses in Africa, I never dreamed it would get this far.<sup>1</sup> I saw myself in the background supporting the ones who were really making the difference.

I started off with providing administrative support from the U.S. for courses in Kenya, which evolved into meeting Daniel Kamanga, director of the Africa Leadership Transformation Foundation from South Africa, and going to Ghana in February 2020 to be the registrar.

I ended up being the onsite logistics manager, managing things from meals and snacks for participants and leaders, course leader support for six leaders, registrar, accountant and everything else that needed to be done outside the room.

With the support of Kent Knight from the U.S. and Stephen Leake from Australia, we trained students fulfilling their year of national service who had never done any of the Landmark courses to be a first-class assisting team. They emerged as leaders in their own right and took on ownership of the course. Such a miraculous experience and the beginnings of our goal to empower a million leaders in Africa!

We came home to the world shutting down due to the pandemic. How could we pull this off now? The idea of being able to produce that many in-person courses was an impossible promise already, but now what?

Having the conference poster presentations as YouTube videos was the first miracle. Sarah and I worked long hours getting our poster

presentation ready. We never could have reached so many people in the old style of walking around and trying to cram in as much as you could in the short time allowed for the poster sessions.

Out of our poster we created partnerships with amazing and powerful people from Australia, New Zealand and the Maldives—Marg Jones, Jennie Fraine, Stephen Leake, Rachel Barwell, Rose Grant and Shafeea Zubair—all excited about what we were up to. We began conversations with University of Zambia about putting on a course, but had to switch from the Being a Leader courses since they were never offered online.

Besides, the infrastructures are so poor, even using Google docs in Ghana was a challenge, due to the unreliable Internet. To put on a full-length online course was daunting.

We began conversations about leadership being missing in climate change conversations with professors from University of Zambia and went on to produce an online summit. We did it in three 90-minute segments to test an online course. We brought together leaders in climate change both at the university level and in NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) that had not met each other. Previously, they had been working in silos. We also discovered what was missing from the conversation were the voices of youth and women. A White Paper was developed out of the summit and presented to government leaders in Zambia.

The vision was unfolding! Next, we developed a course for African Women on Leadership and Mental Well-Being. We saw that women were taking the brunt of the effects of COVID-19 and

climate change. Our course is currently delivered in six two-hour sessions covering the four pillars of leadership, with an emphasis on:

- Integrity delivered by Margaret Oloko, a professor from Kenya
- Forgiveness delivered by the Rev. Dr. Eileen Epperson from the U.S.
- Resilience delivered by Angela Philp from New Zealand and living in France
- Abuse of Power delivered by Millie Rasekoala from South Africa
- Mental Well-Being delivered by Tolu Afonja from South Africa
- An additional session for sharing what they have discovered and the future they are creating.

It turned out to be very powerful and inspiring, and better than we imagined!

Our first course had more than 300 women registered. As registrar, this was both a miracle and nightmare. In addition to managing registrations, I deliver communications between sessions, both bulk and individual, record attendance and make-up recordings, offer Zoom and Internet support during the course and send out certificates to eligible participants.

We were creating structures as we went along and, at the time, I had limited skills with managing data. I have learned so much about what is possible with spreadsheets and Zoom reports. I was forced out of my usual way of operating, doing things on my own and spending hours upon hours on each task, to sharing my commitment in my communities and accepting support.

I did put on the brakes a little and requested a smaller enrollment for our second course to build up our structures. My request for 150 ended up with 170 women registered. I was then presented with a new challenge of tracking the amount of time participants actually spent in their Zoom course sessions. That problem was resolved after sharing about it and receiving support from my community. I handed the task over to a programmer who now completes tracking

participant attendance with ease using a program that automates the task.

We are discovering so much! In our attempt to bring integrity to ensuring that women who missed a session listened to make-up recordings, we learned it does not work to use a knowledge check in the form of an online quiz. The response from non-native English-speaking participants with limited access to education was low. We are reexamining that structure based on what we learned to better serve the women.

For our third course, our team in Nigeria has a goal to register 500 people in the course. Our structures will be put to the test again!

I now see my “background” role is really the backbone and the glue that holds all of these courses together. Everything I have learned over the years from being an est Training staff member, taking Landmark courses, and assisting in Landmark programs and with the leadership course are all what trained me for this role.<sup>2</sup> Integrity, impeccability and excellence are the key. I have the experience of making a global contribution. My vision of Africa as the catalyst for a world that works for everyone with no one and nothing left out is unfolding!

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course, An Ontological/Phenomenological Model, is a leadership laboratory first developed by Werner Erhard and others. First offered in 2004, the course is now available at several hundred colleges and universities around the world.
- 2 In 1971, Werner Erhard founded Erhard Seminars Training, often referred to as est, that offered a program known as the est Training, which was delivered in various formats over time and was the forerunner of The Landmark Forum.

# CREATING AN INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE MINING INDUSTRY IN AFRICA

MYRIAM CARIUS

As an attorney, I specialize in banking and finance. My sectors of focus are infrastructures, energy, and natural resources in Africa. The natural resources sector is at the intersection of my identity as an attorney, an entrepreneur, and a leader. In the Ivory Coast, where I am based, I co-created Carius, Krueger, and Partners, a Pan-African law firm. As of the date of this report, we have offices in Paris, France, and in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Currently, we are engaged in conversations, with other lawyers, to open offices in two additional jurisdictions on the African continent.

One main beneficiary of our services is the African continent. As lawyers, we believe in and support our several industry clients, who contribute to jobs creation, which provides access to education, housing, and healthcare. Our commitment is that people thrive and live with dignity in communities that are complete.

My vision is to create a mining company. What inspired the creation of a mining company?

Up to the date of this report, it has been argued that Africa suffers from a “resource curse.” The so-called resource curse refers to the paradox that faces most resource-rich countries in Africa. The abundance of natural resources in the African continent has not translated into positive economic growth.

Local communities have not benefited from the extraction of mineral resources. Usually, this abundance has been correlated with conflicts.

Since the slave trade and colonial times, the extraction of minerals was operated in a context of extreme violence and inhuman conditions. This unfortunate tradition carried on after the political independence of African countries.

The African conflicts of the 1990s created the opportunity to acknowledge the existence of minerals mined in extreme violent conditions. For instance, diamonds mined in war zones were labeled “blood diamonds.” The trade of these “blood diamonds” triggered the creation of the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme.

The Kimberly Certification Scheme certifies the origin of diamonds across the world. On a side note, it is fascinating that the crimes against humanity that occurred on a global scale during colonial times in Africa and Asia to extract and trade minerals did not cause a global outrage.

Consider the Cullinam diamond, the largest gem-quality rough diamond ever found, weighing 3,106.75 carats, (621.35 grams or 21.9 ounces), which was extracted in South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> South Africa was then operating under one of the most cruel, brutal and racist regimes the African continent has witnessed in modern history. Unless I am mistaken, the crown jewels of the United Kingdom are still proudly exhibited during ceremonies in the United Kingdom.

This is the context of the conversation related to mining in Africa until now. What if the mineral

resources of the African continent were the access to the economic development of its 54 countries? What if the mineral resources of the African continent were the opportunity for 1.5 billion people to live with dignity? What if the exploitation of mineral resources was the opportunity for Africa to lead the action to mitigate (and why not to reverse) the effects of climate change? What if the extraction of minerals was an opportunity for completion to occur between communities? Could the extraction of mineral resources be a blessing for Africa?

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The Cullinan Diamond was discovered at the Premier No. 2 mine in Cullinan, South Africa, on Jan. 26, 1905. Named after Thomas Cullinan, the mine's chairman, the diamond is now located in the Tower of London in the British sovereign's Royal Scepter. Accessed Feb. 6, 2022: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cullinan\\_Diamond](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cullinan_Diamond).



# CONFESSIONS OF A FRONTLINE COVID-19 PHYSICIAN

JESSICA PORTER

"Omicron is not Delta," said Dr. Kelly. Boy, is she right. Today, my only intubated COVID-19 patient was extubated. He was only intubated eight or nine days. What a miracle! I thought he was not going to make it when I first saw him. I read his history. He had respiratory failure and a cardiac arrest on the same day. He required emergent intubation in the emergency room and admission to the intensive care unit (ICU). He was not OK. He was on the brink of death and he made it. A second chance at life!

Delta, the coronavirus variant that emerged in the U.S. in the summer of 2021, brought in a shocking wave of respiratory failure and death, even in young people with no medical problems. I signed so many death certificates, I have lost count. In fact, my hospital had the highest mortality rate compared to my sister hospitals.

I remember one patient, John, in his 30s, dad of four, an incidental diagnosis after a work-up from a car accident. He worsened quickly and passed away suddenly one night. The following day I would care for his wife, who was sick but not as sick as him. She thanked me for caring for her husband. She was committed to promoting vaccination in John's name.

His death would not be in vain. I also took care of her father who was down the hall. They were so close yet so far in the negative-pressure isolation rooms. Emphasis on the isolation. He was an elderly gentleman, high functioning even with such terribly low oxygen levels. He developed EKG

(electrocardiogram) changes consistent with an active heart attack right in front of my eyes.

Transferred on an emergency basis to a cardiac catheterization lab, he survived the heart attack. However, he passed away a few weeks later from COVID-19-related complications. It was such a relief to get his daughter home to her children. During that hospital stay, she lost two of the most important men in her life to this virus. She was the lucky one to return home to be with her children. I think of her often and pray for her and her family.

That was not the first time I had taken care of a family infected with COVID-19. I took care of a husband and wife. He was in his 60s and she was in her 50s. Initially, I cared for him. He improved quickly and was able to be discharged in five days. When she was initially admitted, I was not involved in her care.

One day, I happened to see her because he told me she was in the room next door. I entered her room to share updates about her husband. She looked very ill. She was on a high-flow nasal cannula to give her additional oxygen, and her green eyes were peeled open with a look of desperation. She was so winded that she could barely speak. She looked much worse than him. I assumed her care after I discharged her husband.

Eventually, she developed worsening respiratory failure and ultimately required intubation and mechanical ventilation. I was one of the last

people to see her alive. I remember the day very well. Her green eyes still had the look of desperation. She was having air hunger. Her nurse was at her bedside and she was in the recliner. I told her that she was not progressing in the right direction. In fact, she was declining.

I was concerned that she would have respiratory failure, and I wanted to obtain her wishes while I could still speak with her. I asked her if she would consider comfort care or hospice. I shared about the other option and my experience that once a patient arrives to the ICU, their chances of survival are dismal. It may only prolong her suffering. COVID-19 may be the thing that takes her life.

This conversation was not the one that I wanted to have with a 50-something mother and wife but it needed to be done. She communicated with head nods and shakes as she was barely verbal due to her air hunger. Later, she was able to communicate with her husband via text, and immediately he called the hospital administration. Within a few hours, I was notified that he no longer wanted me involved in her care. How dare I offer comfort care and hospice to his wife!

The hospital chief executive officer became involved in the complaint and even gowned up on the COVID-19 unit to apologize on the hospital's behalf. It was a big deal. I received counseling from the hospital leadership, and I was referred to "The Language of Caring" program. A colleague took over her care. She was in intensive care for about one month and eventually passed away. I pray her family is at peace.

Another patient, a man, was one strange character. He insisted that he would not accept a broad-spectrum antiviral medication, as he was concerned about potentially having cancer in the future due to the medication. He requested nebulized hydrogen peroxide because a physician in Colombia had reportedly claimed success with this.

The pharmacist laughed at me when I asked if that medication was available at our hospital. Vapor from nebulized hydrogen peroxide is dangerous.<sup>1</sup> It can burn the throat, nose and eyes causing injury including blindness. "Primum non nocere" is our physician's oath: "First, do no harm."

A common phrase I whisper to myself when my patients have unconventional requests. The patient improved slowly without either medication and eventually was discharged.

These are the confessions of a physician on the frontline of COVID-19.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Important Statement. Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. Sept. 21, 2021. Accessed Feb. 6, 2022, [www.community.aafa.org/blog/danger-don-t-nebulize-hydrogen-peroxide-and-breathe-it-to-try-to-treat-or-prevent-covid-19](http://www.community.aafa.org/blog/danger-don-t-nebulize-hydrogen-peroxide-and-breathe-it-to-try-to-treat-or-prevent-covid-19).



# IT'S GOT TO BE PERFECT ... THEN I CAN START TO CONTRIBUTE

SEAN POTTER

## ABSTRACT

*I'm here to share about my experiences between 2016 and 2022 in exploring different areas of contributing and giving back. What I discovered was making a difference doesn't need to look a certain way. Through my exploring ways of giving back I created my commitment for the world that everyone is empowered in whatever way it looks.*

## THE BUILDING BLOCKS

Everything we need is in our network of people that make up our lives. In 2016, I met Eshie. We became friends and did a musical duet together. In the summer, we had two mutual friends, Stephanie and Greg, who were getting married at a yacht club in a small, intimate beach-themed wedding. I was asked to play some guitar and accompany Eshie. The wedding was beautiful.

Later that day I was in conversation with Greg, who shared about volunteering at an organization called Working Gear. He volunteered to help their clients, mostly low-income or unemployed individuals in search of employment, get outfitted with interview clothing and industry-appropriate clothing mainly for construction jobs. Greg shared

vividly the amazing experience of supporting clients to get outfitted with appropriate clothes and walk out the door happy and empowered. It was nice to hear that.

## A REMINDER

One summer night in Vancouver, my bandmate/best friend/housemate Max Anderson and I were walking downtown to check out a small venue called Lanalou's to listen to music. Our rehearsal space owners invited us to the venue for an Open Mic music night. Just before arriving at Lanalou's, I ran into this friend from a few years back, Greg Westerlund. I asked him what he's up to and he told me that he just finished a volunteering shift at Working Gear nearby. There it was again, a gentle reminder and I left that interaction thinking to myself, "Maybe one day I'll do some kind of volunteering like that."

## BOLD POSSIBILITY

There were a few visitors from Florida in Seattle, Washington where our Wisdom Unlimited course was being held. One of the visitors was Carla. She shared with the group about "Showering Love," a project in Fort Lauderdale, Florida that converted an old bus into a mobile shower program for homeless people.

I was so inspired being from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and having seen growing numbers of homeless people throughout the city. At that moment, I connected to a possibility of community and contribution. There I was in a course room for Wisdom with about 50 people. I promptly stood up and shared that I would create

a mobile shower program in Vancouver. Everyone cheered and for the rest of the weekend I had coursemates come up and talk with me about how inspired they were by me and sharing about the issues of big cities and homelessness.

Back home in Vancouver, now 2019, I was sharing this new possibility and I was experiencing miracles in people wanting to come together. In my sharing, I simply presented what I could see would happen from the Showering Love project. I wasn't trying to have people join my team because I didn't even have a team or plan yet. Nevertheless, my friends wanted to contribute in a wide variety of ways. They included:

- My friend Adam, who used to drive a bus, offered to be the operator of this shower bus.
- A friend of a friend was a plumber who made a generous offer to do the mechanical work for free as long as all the parts were purchased.
- My boss offered to help in some kind of way. A power generator could be borrowed so the water with the buses could be heated.
- An introduction leader friend had access to an old delivery truck that was broken down and needed a new engine. Jorge even called up his old high school automotive teacher and created a plan to bring in this delivery truck for a class project to replace the engine.
- My wife Amy's employer, a large telecom company, had a partnership available. If I created a nonprofit organization, then they would donate materials like soap and towels to the cause.
- I contacted the City of Vancouver about a permit to connect to city water, how to deal with the wastewater and where this shower bus could be placed. They put me in touch with city engineers and recommended a park location.

All this occurred in the months following my experience meeting Carla in Seattle. All or most of the building blocks of community projects were available to me, and the possibility was alive and present.

## THE DEATH OF POSSIBILITY AND CONTRIBUTIONS

At some point I stopped taking action and the mood changed from possibility to too much responsibility. So why stop? I had it that creating this Showering Love project had some things that had to be a certain way. For example, I felt it **should** be created from nothing and joining up with an existing nonprofit organization was a cop out and not the real deal.

Another factor that stopped me was, "I am a Wisdom graduate and a Conference for Global Transformation attendee so I **should already** be doing this work." Also, I was balancing the rest of life which included playing in a rock band, being newly married and assisting as an introduction leader with Landmark. I approached my Showering Love project from scarcity as though trying to fit anything more on my already full plate wasn't possible.

Whenever I had a conversation with someone who would ask, "Hey, how is your community project about the showers and supporting homeless people going? It's such an amazing project idea," guilt and shame would swell inside as I thought about what to say. At first, I would say, "Yup it's going good, I am going to start organizing a bit more after these next few weeks."

Eventually, after the same question was asked, I would say, "Ugh, yeah, I haven't been doing much with the Showering Love project." Some guilt had deepened and I felt as though I was a bad and lazy person for not getting this project up and off the ground.

## MOVING FORWARD WITH CURIOSITY

If you want results, then take action. If you want new results, then take new actions. It is simple. This is something we all know on some level and yet knowing this makes no difference on its own.

I discovered for myself that my contribution was paralyzed because it's got to be perfect and then I can start to contribute. The first breakthrough in this journey was to recognize I made myself wrong, big time! I declared to myself and people I shared with previously that I wouldn't continue with the Showering Love project for now and

what I discovered about making myself wrong. The impact on my life was I stopped enjoying contributing to others and disconnected from the true joy of contributing just for the sake of contributing.

There were no miracles and possibilities there for me or for anyone around me at this time of life in late 2019. What was missing was a *why*, a powerful context to generate new speaking and actions. I created a new context for myself around contribution: Everything I do matters and there is nowhere to get to.

I contacted a friend of a friend who is the director of a local Vancouver nonprofit organization. I started showing up Saturday mornings to help with whatever was needed. Since starting to volunteer, I have been invited to be on the Working Gear Board of Directors. I work in the trades and have a particular access to people who work in that sector so I will contribute the resources I can.

What I am curious about now is what will the Working Gear organization look like in one year and five years? Where can I contribute to expand not only this cause of supporting less fortunate folks in being ready to work but all over Vancouver? What relationships and partnerships might grow from this?

Lastly, during the fall of 2021, I was introduced to Fiona who is a leader in the homeless camps in the downtown eastside of Vancouver. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the homeless people from multiple city parks, and they ended up in a place called CRAB Park. She asked me to come and help with a tent that needed to be set up. All of previous volunteering was done through some kind of organization and here I was showing up with no volunteer t-shirt or some coordinator directing me and other volunteers.

I connected with a person who lived in the tent city, and we worked together to secure the camp's main shelter. The main tarp was off-kilter and it was making it hard to get together and have food. We made it work with old tent pegs, scrap wood and whatever we could find to make it work. What I was left with was that making a difference doesn't have to look a certain way!

## **Vision and the Future of Contribution**

With COVID-19 heavily impacting all of us around the world, creating and launching the Showering Love project has stopped due to social distancing and related guidelines. That being said, the vision I see possible is breaking the lid open on how we live globally.

All over the world, cities are grappling with homelessness. I see it all starts with relating and how are we relating to each other. For example, how do the people who live a life of stable housing relate to people with no homes? What if we weren't trying to solve social issues locally within our area codes and communicated beyond regions and borders? My vision and commitment for the world is everyone is empowered in whatever that looks like for the world.

A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

# IN MEMORY OF BRIAN REGNIER

GARY BRYSON

THE SOUL IS **B**ARED

THE TREE FEARS **R**S NOT THE LOSS OF LEAVES

A **F**RIEND IS GONE, NOT FORGOTTEN

**C**ALM AS A RIVER

TRAN**Q**UILITY IN MY HEART

TR**R**UTH, BEAUTY, GOODNESS

TH**E** LIGHT OF A CANDLE

FILLING **G** ALL THE DARKENED SPACE

NO OXYGE**N**, NO LIGHT

**I**N GOD WE TRUST

THE LEGACY LIV**E**S IN THE TOUCHED

REST IN ETE**R**NITY FOR EVER



# A PANDEMIC, A POSTER AND DIVINE TIMING

AMY BURRY

I did The Landmark Forum in 2006, Wisdom Unlimited course in 2008 and became a Landmark staff member in 2009, all in Toronto, Canada.<sup>1</sup> I always enjoyed the environment of the Wisdom Course Area, and everyone always talked about the Conference for Global Transformation.

I never attended it for a couple of reasons: 1) I could not justify the cost of flying to Los Angeles for the weekend, staying in a hotel and all the other costs involved in a trip like that, and, perhaps, the larger reason and 2) despite being a staff member, it occurred as though I wasn't up to anything fitting "global transformation."

Then came 2020 and the global pandemic of COVID-19. Suddenly, everything changed.

In true unstoppable Landmark fashion, for the first time, the conference was going to be delivered online. Reason#1 was out of the way, so I registered.

Attending was miraculous and life-changing for me, and I finally understood why the Wisdom community raves about it. I immediately registered for 2021. It was another miraculous and life-changing weekend. Little did I know, the biggest transformation would happen the day after the conference was over.

You see, at the 2020 conference, I knew there were the posters, and they were all on video, available to watch on YouTube. I think that I watched maybe two or three of them and did not end up watching the rest for one reason or another. So, for 2021,

I made a promise to myself that I would watch all the posters to be connected to what graduates in the community are up to in the world.

On the Monday after the conference (a holiday in Canada), I put YouTube on my TV and was set to binge watch the 2021 posters.

Enter the poster titled, "One In 250 People Have Super-Powers and Don't Even Know It."

The video was put together by a graduate named David Schwartz and while the title is what I was initially drawn to, this video changed my life forever.

When David first started speaking, there was nothing remarkable about him at first. He just seemed like a "regular" guy. Turns out, the video was about Asperger's Syndrome which David had recently been diagnosed with at the age of 64.

Immediately, I was listening differently since I never would have guessed he was on the autism spectrum. I know people with autism, and I could "tell." This man I could not. As he continued talking about what it is like having Asperger's, I found myself thinking, "Huh, this sounds like many of the things I deal with."

Soon after the video was over, I got into action and started some research. Where the heck do I start? There's an online quiz for everything these days, right? So, I set out to find one about autism. I didn't need to look too far and found one on Autism Canada. The website is: [autismcanada.org/autism-explained/screening-tools/adult-2/](https://autismcanada.org/autism-explained/screening-tools/adult-2/).

Fifty questions, easy enough to answer, get the result and move forward. Well, answering the questions was a remarkable experience. With each question, so many memories flooded in, and replays of situations, conversations, thoughts, difficulties or talents.

The answers are totaled, and you are given a score which communicates an individual's "risk" of being autistic: Low Risk 1-20, Medium Risk 20-29 and High Risk 30-50.

Well, didn't I score a whopping 46! Holy cats! Could this be the explanation for the laundry list of things I both struggled with and excelled at over my life? All the times I thought that I was a weirdo or just terrible at small talk, had a great capacity to remember people and other things, just really, really loved music, couldn't stop myself from randomly swaying back and forth, preferred to be by myself or loved figuring out how things work ... the list goes on.

But how was I not even aware the autism spectrum could be an option for me? As I learned, there has been a vast amount learned in the last five to 10 years about how autism is frequently missed in women because it shows up differently.

Now, I had a very probable *reason* for these struggles, and they were *real* instead of being some personal failing of mine. I cannot tell you the number of times I have asked myself over the years, "Why am I like this?" "When will I get it together?" "Why do I do *that*?" "Why did I say *that*?" "What is wrong with me?" "Will I ever be successful?" "Why am I so good at X and so terrible at Y?"

In my bones, I knew autism was the answer, as though finding a piece of myself I didn't know was missing. I saw my whole life through a new lens.

Great! Now what? Get a diagnosis of course! I spoke with my doctor, shared what I discovered so far and requested to be assessed. She sent me a bunch of resources and I contacted them all. She also gave me the option of having a virtual appointment with a psychiatrist. I said yes.

Meanwhile, the replies were coming in from the other resources. Unsurprisingly, there were long wait times and high costs. That was not going to stop me! I kept doing more research and found a

couple of YouTube channels that were *very* helpful with navigating this new world I found myself in. One was Yo Samdy Sam and the other was Asperger's from the Inside.

One video I watched on the Asperger's from the Inside channel was a Zoom call with several people diagnosed as adults. They spoke about what their journey was like. Even though the man who created the channel is from Australia, wouldn't you know there happened to be a woman from Canada in this video? She talked about the facility where she was diagnosed online that is about an hour from where I live. While she didn't say the name of it, I set out to find it and I did. It is the ADHD & Spectrum Centre, and what is really awesome is they only hire practitioners who are neurodiverse. I had my first appointment with one of their social workers at the beginning of July and a full assessment booked for mid-September. Progress!

About a week after that first appointment, I heard back from the psychiatrist and booked that appointment too for mid-July. In the end, we spent two hours together over two phone meetings. He asked me many, many questions and, by the end of the second hour, had diagnosed me with autism.

*Wow!* I felt so validated, understood and *relieved*. In September, I went through with the full assessment (because, why not?) and ... yep, autism confirmed again.

Throughout all of this, which included some of the most challenging days I can ever remember experiencing, my fellow Landmark colleagues and human resources department were extremely supportive. Even without a formal diagnosis, I made a bold request to work in a different part of the enterprise, one more suited to my strengths (and weaknesses).

I was given the opportunity to apply for a role in the IT department at world headquarters and I am happy to say that is where I now work from home. Before the whole COVID-19 situation, a request like this would have involved a move to California. (While my parents are alive, I am committed to staying in Toronto so that was a non-starter.)

On Dec. 7, 2021, I celebrated my 12th anniversary of being a staff member for Landmark. Now, I

feel as though I am living a dream. I love my new position; I still get to make a huge contribution to what Landmark is up to in the world using my greatest skills. I am eternally grateful to my company for truly being a demonstration that anything is possible.

You know, I have never been much of a believer in divine intervention or anything like that. I came across this phrase of “divine timing,” which is the belief that everything in your life happens at exactly the right moment. Though things or events may seem tough, unusual or not make sense, divine timing assures you that the universe is placing people, things, challenges and more into your life when you can handle them.

I cannot think of a better way to describe this journey. Oh yeah, remember reason #2 for me not attending the conference for the first 10 years of my career? Remember, it occurred as though I wasn't up to anything fitting “global transformation?”

Well, now I get that I am a global voice for autism and neurodiversity. I get to share with, and educate, people on what my expression of being on the spectrum looks like.

Just as my life-changing journey of discovery started with watching a conference poster presentation, I hope my sharing here in the journal will be the start of such a journey for many others.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The Landmark Forum is the flagship course offered by Landmark and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs.

# BEING ONE WITH MANY

GORDON KEATING

I have long loved the be/do/have distinction in The Landmark Forum and have dwelt in the question of what hinders us from living in, and as, our being.<sup>1</sup> For more than two years I have had a commitment for the world which relates to awakening to the being of ourselves as human beings and knowing ourselves as this being.

My commitment concerns the development of people across all religious viewpoints, including agnostic and atheistic viewpoints. My commitment also relates to the current world cultural contexts that create separation, divisions and conflicts among people in their relationships, families, organizations, communities and nations. Disunity seems to be blocking cooperation on many levels and in areas that are critical to our survival and well-being on Planet Earth.

In the face of these conditions, what I am committed to is this: A world where all of us trust to know ourselves in, and as, aware presence (being) regardless of what we are experiencing inwardly or outwardly and from this trust, know that we are one with ourselves, others and the world.

This promise has presented a challenge in the sense of both expanding and deepening who I am for myself and the world and revealing the limits I have in realizing being. Recently, some words came to me that led me to write a poem which expresses my commitment in a different, and poetic, way and connects the commitment to the theme for this year's conference—"Allowing Vision to Speak."

I am happy to share the poem here.

## BEING ONE WITH MANY

Come one, come all,  
Enter the living room of my being.  
Come one, Come all,  
And see from your being, it is the same.  
Come one, come all,  
Bring along the many things that you love.  
Come one, come all,  
Celebrate the myriad ways we differ.  
Come one, come all,  
Speaking vision for the world as many.  
Come one, come all,  
Listening vision for the world as one.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The Landmark Forum is the flagship course offered by Landmark and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs. Be/do/have is a key idea offered in the course.

# EMPOWERING OTHERS

AMY CHENG

## ABSTRACT

*Various contributions to my life, work environment, friends and career have revealed to me that truly what you contribute to others returns ten-fold or more. The power of listening to the greatness of others in combination with taking intentional actions “allows vision to speak.”*

In conclusion, I don't have to be the one doing the heavy lifting to complete something or bring fruition to a dream or commitment to the world and dreams can come true! Sharing your ideas and passion in the world has it live beyond you and connects you with the opportunities that you may not even know exist.

I highly recommend that one starts with an idea, shares it with the people in your life and sees how it takes off.

Please note that names have been changed to provide anonymity.

## INTRODUCTION

I have been known as a hard-working individual for almost as long as I have lived. Basically, since I was 5 years old and in kindergarten. “Amy has worked very hard,” as my teacher, Mrs. Lam, wrote in my report card.

Now setting this aside and delegating to others certainly seemed like a huge feat especially when

it came to producing a Wellness Fair event at work, convincing my husband to become a composer and mentoring a new immigrant to find his career path.

“Where and how does one start?” you may ask.

Setting goals, looking for certain results? No, quite the contrary. Surprisingly enough, the measures of success unfolded during the conversations, collaborations, events and learning along the way.

Sharing is the key!

## FINDINGS

### Summer Wellness Fair

One of my good friends and fellow project managers at work, Steve, had an amazing idea: to build community by setting up a “Buddy Program” at work during the pandemic. For the last three years, he and I have already “buddied up” and meet up virtually each Friday to converse with each other and reflect on our weekly highs and lows. When he first presented his idea to his manager, his manager was an adamant “no.” I discovered this during one of our Friday sessions.

In spring 2021, I asked myself, “What do we need to support our peers and team members working ‘socially distant’ and virtually from home?” Steve’s “Buddy Program” came to mind along with one of his passions and commitments in life, health and well-being.

On one of our Friday calls, I proposed that idea to Steve and invited him to invite his many contacts at the company where we work to be our guest speakers and presenters at our first inaugural Summer Wellness Fair. I also specifically asked Steve to share his “Buddy Program” with everyone he invited to the fair.

The two of us met and collaborated after we created the idea. He invited the speakers and I contributed with the website and registration system.

We presented this to our vice president, chief development officer and his communication director and team. They were blown away with what we had already developed and gotten together in the two months Steve and I worked on it together.

We grew the core team with two more members to support French translation and the master of ceremony role on the virtual conference platform.

Over July and August, we had 31 unique presenters at 32 events, including two C-suite team members. Average attendance was 40 employees per event across the Canadian division. It was an amazingly successful event.

Not only was this event successful, it proved to me that an idea which seemed large and out-of-reach to deliver was indeed possible and achievable with two people!

What had the "Summer Wellness Fair" come into fruition was seeing the vision from my friend Steve's idea for a Buddy Program and keeping it alive in our small-scale Friday meetings. When there was the need and demand for that vision from the greater company and our peers and team members, we took the necessary intentional actions that included setting up the website, registration system, e-mail advertising, sending invitations and delivering it.

### **Composer**

My husband and good friend, Sean, is already a talented lead guitar player with his band, "The Hunter and the Potter," recently renamed to "Dead, At Least."

Seeing beyond the shadow of his guitar, I saw his passion in editing our road trips and vacation videos on the computer. Beyond playing his guitar, I saw the possibility of him being a composer and I suggested that to him.

From that idea he was invigorated and shared that with his friends and family. The outcome from his sharing is an award-winning music project from a

family friend, Eleanor Albanese, "Cradle Moon."

Over the holidays he brought his electric keyboard home from the jam studio and kept it awkwardly sitting by the front door and coat closet where it was standing room only. I gently suggested to him to move it to the living room where he can sit down and readily tinker and wail on it whenever he had an idea or an itch.

This paved the way for collaborations on a documentary.

Opportunities are endless and around the corner, if you're willing to share what you're up to, passionate about and open to.

### **Dream Job**

I met my friend, Jim, at the Landmark office in Vancouver, and we connected right away as if we're long-lost brother and sister. Soon after that I learned he was looking for work and newly immigrated from India.

My co-worker, Steve, from the Summer Wellness Fair, and I got him his first job as a call center agent at the same company where Steve and I worked.

Since Jim was a new dad and looking to support his wife and daughter to immigrate to Canada after him, he was determined to secure a better paying job and career. He specifically asked me to be his mentor.

I provided six months of mentoring, coaching and practicing for his interview. The gap for me was that I couldn't be his proxy. I certainly didn't have the facial hair and low voice to pass as a gentleman for his interview. What I had to do was let go and trust that he was set and ready to fly solo. Not too far from sending your children off to their first day of grade school was how the experience felt for me. A few days later, he messaged me the good news, "I got my dream job!"

As a result of the Wellness Fair and my friend getting his dream job, this gave me the courage and strength to ask for a promotion from my vice president at work. After three months of deliberation and my not taking a "no," I was granted my promotion and a 21% raise at a

corporate company. I was blown away in disbelief. I never communicated to my direct manager, who helped negotiate my pay raise, the dollar figure I wanted and she delivered it. *Unreal.*

## **CONCLUSION**

Dream big, share your dreams and you'll be surprised who will knock at your door and how big it will get in the world. You can take on the world, because abra-ca-dabra.\*

*\*In memory of my fellow Landmark friend, Ron Elliott: "Abra-ca-dabra, which comes from Aramaic, a Semitic language that shares many of the same grammar rules as Hebrew, translates as 'I will create as I speak.'"*

# THE COOKIE SHARE

LORI WATKINS

Every day for one year, my brother brought home half of his chocolate chip cookie from preschool. He ate one half of the cookie and saved the other half for me. My family and I were living in Chile at the time. This is the story told by my mother, and every time she tells it she has a playful look.

My brother was only 2 years old and I was 1. This was the beginning of a relationship with my brother that has been embossed on my life for 44 years and continues today. Now 46, my brother works as a doctor at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland.

I remember calling him Oct. 22, 2021. I had been admitted to the hospital. I was diagnosed with COVID-19 and double pneumonia. When he answered the phone, I gasped between breaths, "Brad, it's me. I need you to talk to the doctors and speak to mom and dad for me. I am so sick. I just can't do it."

## A REPORT OF OBSERVATION

As I lay in the hospital bed, I don't think about much. Nothing like this had ever happened. I just turn to my side and wait patiently for the nurse. Since I am a nurse, I think that I know what's next, but then again this is my first time as a patient. I'm being told to be still. I am no longer allowed to move freely. I am dependent on medical staff. I close my eyes and fall asleep.

At 1 a.m., a nurse softly speaks my name and nudges my shoulder. She says, "Your O2 sat (oxygen saturation level) has dropped to 88%. I'm going to put some oxygen on you. It is one liter of oxygen ... There you go. Now go back to sleep." Even under her mask, I can see her calm demeanor. She is busy. How do I know this? Since I am a nurse, except now I am in the bed as a patient.

As I ponder, "Well, this has never happened before," I realize that I have had so many firsts today. My first MRI (magnetic resonance imaging that creates detailed images of the organs and tissues), breathing treatment and order of prescribed oxygen. I lay in the hospital bed and wait. I know better than this, I am a nurse. Yet, I whisper my commitment between my cracked dry lips. Who I am ... (I stop for a breath) ... for the world ... (breathe) ... is my commitment ... (gasp) ... that all beings are heard.

I know that I shouldn't speak. I am a nurse. I wait. I wait for something and nothing. It's strange to say this, but I am waiting for my next normal breath. I start to compare normal breathing and how I'm breathing now. For me, this is a new measurement. I close my eyes, immersed in memories of swimming freestyle in a large open pool. I imagine counting five calculated strokes. Turning my head, I inhale. I submerge my face in the water, exhaling a slow percussion of playful bubbles. I stroke along, the sunlight flickers and flutters in a doll-like melancholy waltz at the bottom of the pool.

I return from my visionary interpretations. I press my call button for the nurse. Now, I wait. Usually, I'm not the one who must wait. This is a new experience for me. She enters the room and I ask for a breathing treatment. I inhale the medication and wait. I wait for the desired effect.

I think of my brother Brad and our relationship when we were younger. I smile. Remembering when he came to me and asked me to do a drawing for his homework project. I was eight. I was so excited to do this for him! I thought, "Wow! To do something for my big brother, who shared his cookie every day for one year. I can now do something for him that he can't do for himself."

As I lay here, I realize my public persona has expanded from merely being a nurse. My persona is not singular. I'm growing in my participation as an artist. I have now expanded my commitment as an artist for others to be seen as their commitments.

## WORDS AND IMAGES

It wasn't until I was being made to be still as a patient in a hospital bed that I realized I am a kinesthetic learner, which means I learn by carrying out physical activities rather than listening to lectures or watching demonstrations. Some researchers define kinesthetic learners as students who require whole-body movement to process new and difficult information.<sup>1</sup> That's me!

When looking at participation, from practicing a sport to creating the form and structure of the arts, I have had many "ups and downs," "bumps in the road" and "one step forward, two steps back" moments. What if these moments were the prize? What can be discovered by missing the mark? This reminds me of being a flutist as a young girl. I found it awkward to stand in front of the music stand, my fingers pressing and releasing the desired notes on the keypads of my flute.

Over the years, I develop a love for hands-on learning and providing bedside care. Restoring the integrity of the skin in patients with wounds becomes one of my favorite tasks. I am reminded by my nursing instructors that skin is the first line of defense. When the skin is compromised, the body is susceptible to infection. Even to this day I can hear their specific instructions.

Since my hospital stay and being dependent on others, I discovered that I have more to offer healthcare now that I've been a patient. I quite possibly have an access to reinventing the doing of my nursing tasks. Could this lead to a different culture in healthcare or in art for me that thrives?

I speak not only in words, I think in images. As an artist but mostly being known as a nurse, I remember comments such as, "Oh, you use the right side and left side of your brain." Or, I've been asked, "Do you have a photographic memory?"

I look closely now and wonder. Is the Eternal knocking at my front door? Am I being led to a breakthrough in the narrative of what an artist

is? What is the experience of hanging out with complexity? What form of expression will this arise in?

As I speak in a cadence of images, I am dismantling a story. Reinventing the narrative, for what and who is an artist. What enrolls the creative process and expands participation? I can't wait to look at it. I can't wait to have others look at what could be seen as a groomed and cultivated garden and say, "Wow! Look at all those daisies," or "Whoa, is that a weed?"

After these experiences, I am free, embarking on a freely-formed future. I have peace of mind. Thinking again about the kinship that my brother and I shared when we were children, I marvel that such a durable bond was created simply by the sharing of a cookie.

## PUBLIC PERSONA AS AN ARTIST

After six months of recovering from the coronavirus, I look again at what I want to express. I could write about ancestral healing and generational trauma. I'm tempted to write about failing ecosystems. What could be possible if I altered the conversation of the "cookie share?" I asked my brother once, "What do you think I value?" His reply, "independent thought." I love that he expressed this. My brother recognizes me not only as a nurse, but as an artist. It affirms who I am.

I am connected to my brother everyday by being a nurse. I continue to want to be connected to my brother. I cherish and acknowledge the fusible elements between doctor and nurse, brother and sister. I discover that by being the patient instead of the nurse, I am also being called to work as an artist. I think to myself, "Wow! Look at those daisies." I am enthusiastic about this future of play, action and comradery. I am eager to embrace the unfolding of this newly-invented becoming.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Reese, V.L. and Dunn, R. "Learning-Style Preferences of a Diverse Freshmen Population in a Large, Private, Metropolitan University by Gender and GPA." *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*. 2007. 9:95-112. doi:10.2190/N836-888L-2311-2374. S2CID 144555524.



# I VISION YOU

CATHY CLARKE AND MELISSA GOLD

Both graduates of Wisdom Unlimited for the Arts, we started working together with a weekly call to support each other in developing our artistic expression shortly after the world shut down from COVID-19. Inevitably, we decided to create something together. So, it made sense to begin working toward submitting a collaborative video to the Conference for Global Transformation.

We are two artists, using different media (quilting and painting), wondering what it takes to let vision speak. Since we both work in visual artforms, surely our work is already doing that? Our artistic languages are structural, non-verbal, after all—with a large dollop of immediate emotion. Yet, what might be available if I “vision” you? What might appear? We cannot know before we begin.

We start with a number of objects, pieces of cloth cut from small squares of scrap fabric and fashioned into the shape of leaves. Why do we start with that? Because they are there, random and beautiful objects that pass through our vision. Why not start with that? Where does visioning start anyway but from something we see? We decide to play together with the same toys.

We begin to ponder what we want to do. Beyond the new details we might discover, what might we find if we let the static object begin to move in my mind and watch as it also moves through your mind? Moreover, how do we do it together? After all, we are much more accustomed to working as individuals. Where do we begin?

Since we are poets, as well as innately verbal creatures, we start the game together by creating

a mind map of words arranged on poster paper. The diagram shows us more than we first notice from the simple fabric leaves—connected thoughts, imagined futures and, inevitably, the clichés associated with the world of the leaves.

Walking away from the map, we create poems to further delve into what we associate with the leaves, then depart the realm of words. Separately, we look at our leaves anew. We begin to quilt and paint, arranging and rearranging images and shapes on the design wall and canvas. Color and shape begin to suggest overall composition. Her work enters my mind through my eyes and leads me in new directions. Meanwhile, her eyes follow my vision in new directions.

Life happens! Many reasons to jettison our project present themselves, from COVID-19 to family demands and many other distractions. At the same time, our judgments and assessments of our work also impede us. Is what I’m doing worthy of the term “art?” Do my fledgling skills in acrylics deserve respect? Although oft collaged, the old question of “Is it good enough?” returns because we are entering unfamiliar terrain. We are tempted to give up more than once, but our friend is counting on us. We don’t want to let the other person down because they can’t go forward without us. We press on, using affirmations to each other to expand our skills to meet the challenges. Repeatedly, we embrace our commitment to the other collaborator, which overcomes our individual lack of confidence. In fact, that promise to the other person drowns out the howling of self-doubt.

Finally, we meet and share what we have created—a big reveal. So much is similar! We both incorporate cycles and circles of life. Yet, each of us, observing the same object, has a different take on it. For example, one of us conceives of time as shifting in a clockwise pattern, while the other sees it as having a counterclockwise bearing. Time moves always, never stopping for both of us, but we vision it as moving in opposite directions.

Excited that we have discovered unexpected ways of perceiving the invisible, we long now to recreate the other person's creation. In our game, you throw the ball to me, now I get to throw it back. Still, can I truly vision you when we do not even see time the same way? Having seen where your vision took you, can I join you there? How do I get to what you see? How do I allow you to arrive where I am?

Again, we separate and, again, we pick up the tools of our art and begin. We finish our second pieces and step away. My new vision reflects her first vision. Her new vision has moved to a new location. Her recreation is where mine was. Of course we aren't able to see where the other is going, only where she has been.

Have we won the game? If we repeat our revolving creations a hundred times, will we ever accurately capture the other person's vision? Like all inquiries, this is a game with no end, point, score and way to know whether it is finished. We can play until we declare the game complete... or a deadline arrives.

Maybe the point of the game of visioning her isn't to recreate her. Maybe the point is to show how she has inspired me to stretch further than I could have grasped before, a destination I would not have reached alone. My vision is bent in the direction of hers. Hers is bent toward mine. We are prisms for each other, refracting vision into new directions and colors.

Melissa says: One day I realize, while doing mundane chores, that visioning is perpetual. I vision you, someone else visions me and yet another person visions them, a cycle that is ongoing and never-ending. At the end of multiple reproductions, does the creation look anything like the original? Will it be like the game of broken

telephone, or will it retain something of the original? Or, perhaps, the game is more like lining up a string of hundreds of dominos and providing the impetus that has each one fall against the next, one after the other, until the last domino, which may fall long after we have left the room.

Cathy says: Out of our initial connection, created in support of our individual actions in service of our artistic self-expression, we've created an effective partnership—expressing, listening, inquiring, taking action, seeing more and willing to risk more, expanding ideas and execution further than either of us has ever gone before. I've developed confidence in my artistic "eye," my willingness to abandon a design if it doesn't communicate my vision and create something else. I've loved the playfulness, back-and-forth and openness of the process. This collaboration has provided the space to express, experiment and explore.

We decide to leave it where we leave it. Like time, vision doesn't end. It expands. It radiates out into the cosmos in unpredictable expression. In this way, I vision you and we will never be the same.

We invite everyone to create something of their own by passing through our looking glass into a new wonderland of seeing and creating. Don't tell us where you go, show us. Vision us.

Here are the poems that our game of visioning each other generated.

#### **Melissa's poem:**

Leaf

I hear the leaves sing  
whisper wisdom  
dance divinity

I listen

I watch

They speak of eternity  
in the sun

Each tree entwines  
lacy roots with every sister tree  
a vast chorus in the wind

many tiny voices together  
roaring in the storms  
Even silent, they are not silent  
hidden under the snow  
they rumble with life  
Joyful they burst forth yellow in spring  
murmuring in their summer labor  
within the hive-like verdant crown  
then dignified in gold and orange  
they flutter downward  
in the waning hours of life  
On their final crunch under a boot  
they impart their deep secret  
We leave but we do not leave  
we return as we always have  
don't mourn for us  
our lives are your lives  
you are leaves, too

Change of tempo  
Change of season  
The dance, still graceful, slows  
Time to rest  
Time to recede, reflect  
Giving way to what comes next  
Renewal  
The dance continues

Note: Cathy and Melissa, along with Dave Murrell, have submitted an artist collaborative video about our project, "I Vision You... and You!"

**Cathy's poem:**

Circle Dance  
The need to remain hidden melts away.  
The desire to emerge overwhelms.  
At first tender, tentative.  
Soft colors  
Stay together  
Strength in numbers  
The dance begins  
Challenges are won  
Confidence grows  
Colors become bold  
No longer timid, pushing up and out  
Restless, energetic, excited  
The dance is dynamic  
Lights dim  
Fatigue sets in  
Change of costume



# CURIOSITY FOR CGT 2022

ALBERTA ROMAN

One of my favorite quotes from Werner Erhard is:

*"Happiness is a function of accepting what is. Love is a function of communication. Health is a function of participation. Self-expression is a function of responsibility."*<sup>1</sup>

My commitment for the world, all people have the opportunity for health and happiness, is a vision I am allowing to speak in my life and in print here.

It is 7:30 a.m. and my precious granddaughter is getting out of my warm car to join the hoard of young backpackers moving deliberately, rather like a concert *en mass* through the grey, cold air toward the doors of the middle school.

She has a private TikTok account as do I. It is one thing we do together ... practice making new 10-second videos and participate in each other's TikTok postings. She was open-eyed and repeatedly impressed that her Grammy had a TikTok account. (Who knew that would be one of my benefits of participating in the assisting program during the Wisdom Unlimited course. Thank you Mira and Roydon for setting me up.)

What I became present to in that moment of seeing her leave to join the group was how distant I now am from that world where I used to carry books and notebooks in my crooked aching arm instead of on my back as she does. I feel tenderized in that moment and allow my curiosity about how her experiences are for her, in a way I was not before.

I allow that I have been judgmental, wrong-making and oblivious to her experiences. Gate opens! As we engage in TikTok together, I allow myself to explore technology that I would not have done except for her. It is fun! I have given up some of my opinions about kids and phones. She is agreeable to limit phone time when she is with her Grampy and me on our Monday overnights. Now there are more people I can talk with and be interested in. Allowing has opened up new possibilities with our pre-teens and other teens.

*Allowing* is a conversation that I was introduced to at the Year-end Wisdom online event. I have been playing with it and practicing it since first hearing about the idea of really "granting being" to another's and my own opinions and experiences. This is different than "I'm right" and "You are wrong" or "You are right" and "I am wrong." It's not so either-or.

The Google dictionary definition of "allow" is to "give [someone] permission to do something" and "give the necessary time or opportunity for." Webster's Concise Family Dictionary offers a third meaning "admit, concede" and a fourth meaning is "permit." All of these are good. I am partial to "admit." I see an intentionality and welcome with this definition (as in open the gate).

Here's one quick example of my own experience with allowing. It was Monday. I could find no local first anniversary observance of the Jan. 6 attack on our U.S. Capitol. I started creating by calling our mayor to meet on City Hall steps. Then I e-mailed

several people that I knew inviting them to meet there on the 6th at 6 p.m. Over the next four fast moving days, so many of my thoughts (which I just allowed) were: "This is silly ... no one will show up ... it is too cold and windy ... this is no time for a gathering during COVID-19."

I went. There were three of us. I allowed that, by the numbers measure, this was a failure. I felt a connection with the 200 other Vigils for Democracy around the country. Next year, I will start earlier and be more organized. However, I don't know that I will feel any more alive or as accomplished.

Another area where allowing has contributed to my own and others' health and happiness is in my relationship with our son. He is a wonderful son, and he is not vaccinated against COVID-19. This has been a point of concern, sometimes withheld anger and distancing over the past couple of years. My concern has been for his health and the health of others, including my husband and myself and grandkids who have just now gotten vaccinated.

He does not feel that it is proven to him that his vaccination status will appreciably change whether or not he gets COVID-19 or gives it to someone else. He does not have the pre-existing conditions that his father and I have. Also, he does follow almost all of the other recommendations for staying safe and avoiding the exposure of others.

I, on the other hand, am grateful there are educated, engaged people in the scientific, health and government community to manage their part of this pandemic. I am happy to do what part I can for myself and my community – to get vaccinated and boosted, wear a mask, wash hands frequently and maintain physical distancing except for my bubble.

I keep up with the changing recommendations and mandates dictated by the ever-changing virus. After allowing and owning my disappointment with his choice, and my wrong-making judgment that if he were not being so pigheadedly selfish, he would just get the vaccine, I listened to him in a different way. I could hear him when he said that he did not have the same health risks that I and others have.

I could hear that he really does take precautions seriously. I could hear that he really did not believe

we would be trading partners in sharing accurate information from reliable sources in our discussion and we would, and do now, talk freely about this issue. He texted me that he enjoys coming to lunch weekly on Thursday. New openings!

Another breakthrough in allowing that I have experienced is with my friend seeking custody of her grandchildren. Their mother, my friend's much-loved daughter, is unmistakably using illegal drugs, leaving rehabilitation programs early, and generally has been living an unstable lifestyle for about 10 years and in and out of court. My friend expressed suffering and guilt because of this action and the things she must say, prove and accept about her daughter.

A concern is that her worry and stress over this court action negatively impacts her grandchildren, husband, other family members and her own health. Over several conversations, we have explored the idea of being in a vision of having healthy, happy families, specifically, my friend's and her daughter's. Seeing herself and daughter as partners with this court of professionals who are practiced in dealing with similar issues brings some peace.

In this vision, giving custody of her children to her mother allows her daughter to concentrate on her own health knowing she does not have the responsibility of care for her children at the same time. Perhaps we could be partners for each other's health and happiness.

Taking this conversation of allowing vision to speak into a larger community, I will discuss my work with The League of Women Voters Buffalo/Niagara. The league is a nonpartisan organization (meaning it does not support or oppose any candidate or political party). The league takes positions on issues by concurrence after focus, study and consensus, and informs, educates and advocates around these issues. (Anything I say here are my own words and not those of the league's.)

This idea of allowing has given me belonging, power and effectiveness in hearing others express a variety of opinions. It has allowed me to support the leadership of others. I can see my own leadership through the lens of allowing. As co-chair of the healthcare committee, it is especially

important that I allow opinions of other committee members to be expressed and explored.

In this manner, we have brought to our local membership the possibility of updates to our league's New York position on healthcare and financing of healthcare. By being with the complexities of healthcare and the different opinions involved, we were able to gain concurrence within membership on these issues. Now, we are joining with other states to propose concurrence (of these updates) at the league's annual national convention. Our ultimate goal is updating the league's national position. A vision of health for so many people that can come with this advocacy speaks in these actions.

In conclusion, whether the issue involves relationships that are personal, familial or community and organizational, one thing is clear to me. *Allowing* works! As I engage in writing this report, I have experienced a frequent pull away from sitting, putting pen to paper and sharing important experiences in my life.

As I allow the feeling of wanting ... cookies, wine, shopping, television dramas and any distraction to be OK, I keep my focus and commitment to writing. So, I write. When I make the feeling wrong, I don't write. Producing writing when I say that I will write leaves me in the experience of feeling powerful.

When I practice allowing curiosity about the opinions of others and my own, things seem to flow and move in the direction of a shared vision. For me, my commitment to health and happiness has taught me patience, given me accomplishment and purpose, and supported me in discovering beauty in myself and others. By participating, practicing and being present, I have grown, at times, to be powerful and peaceful. Best of all, I am in loving communication with people around me.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Werner Erhard Quotes. Accessed Feb. 9, 2022, [www.wernererhardquotes.wordpress.com/tag/love/](http://www.wernererhardquotes.wordpress.com/tag/love/). Erhard created the first Training, the forerunner to The Landmark Forum, the signature program offered by Landmark.

# ALLOWING PRESENTATION TO SPEAK

DOUGLAS DUNN

*In 2021, my commitment to the world was to create love and connection through inquiring with my originating circle. Whether this would be within a film club, astronomy society, bridge club or village hall activity group, my focus was on inquiry. This report is about people putting on talks and presentations just for the thrill and fun of it.*

Last summer, I was playing table tennis outside in a park. I live in Devon, England, which is in the southwest part of the country. Playing indoors was not possible so my fellow table tennis group member Gillian and I decided to try out an outdoor table in the nearby Mill Marsh Park. It felt good to be playing out in the sunshine after many months of lockdown. We had a fun game though it was rather wind-dependent.

As we walked back through an avenue of maple trees, Gillian told me that many of the trees in the park were planted in commemoration of a charity called “The Men of the Trees.”<sup>1</sup> I was intrigued and from a newsletter she later gave me I discovered the charitable organization was founded by Richard St. Barbe Baker, an English biologist and botanist, environmental activist and author, in Kenya in 1922. It has spread throughout the world and is responsible for the planting of tens of thousands of trees each year. But, for their aid, some of the finest redwood groves of California would have fallen to the axe.

Many of the trees in Mill Marsh Park were originally planted in an arboretum inside a closed landfill (or tip, as we say in England) in Tavistock, West Devon. When the tip reopened, the trees



were going to be destroyed but, thanks to Bovey Tracey Town Council, some were transplanted in 1982 to the riverside meadow in the park alongside the River Bovey.

Eventually, 160 trees were added and the planting was linked to the Diamond Jubilee of the Men of the Trees.

A few weeks later, I heard that a “tree trail” had been created for children and adults so Gillian and I decided to meet again in the park. With the trail leaflet in hand, we followed the route of 19



numbered trees. I took my camera and enjoyed photographing each tree from a distance and close-ups of their leaves. It felt good taking photos for a reason – to present the trail to members of the Bovey Tracey Activities Trust possibly as a quiz. The trust is a community club for local people who are 55+ years of age to take part in a variety of activities, such as writing, art, poetry, singing and table tennis. I tried to imagine how the trees would appear on a projector screen and whether they would be identified.

The Activities Trust meetings restarted in August after a year-and-a-half long shutdown. As well as table tennis, another activity was bi-weekly coffee mornings followed by short presentations given by members. I put myself forward for one in November with the title, “Name That Tree.” I was well aware I knew nothing about trees apart from the names of 19 in the park.

I began to question why on earth I should be talking to people about trees. I was concerned and had thoughts from past experiences as a software trainer when I remembered overusing PowerPoint to “tell” rather than “show.” So, I began to wonder how I could make the presentation more interactive and fun, allowing the audience to speak and interact.

As soon as I started thinking about others, my concerns started to disappear. I called the creator of the tree trail and leaflet, the Rev. Michael Sansom. Not only did he say that he would come to the talk but he also sent me a few photographs of the trees flowering in the spring.

That encouraged me to take more photos showing their beautiful autumn colors. I decided to print out a sentence on each tree from Michael’s leaflet so that audience members could read out loud as a clue before identifying each tree. Ideas like that kept flowing. Another was for us all to go for a walk in the park, but, perhaps, not in November.

On the morning of the presentation, I was thrilled to see more than 40 people had come to hear the talk. It was no longer my talk but more belonging to the members who came to listen. Everything was ready and I was relieved to see Michael standing at the back of the room and Gillian sitting in the front. The lights went down and we were soon on a virtual tree trail through the park!

Reading out the clues was more fun than I expected especially when people realized why they had been handed small pieces of printed paper. I was also pleased that the music I wanted came on at just the right time, quietly in the background, as I clicked through the slides. Michael had something short and interesting to say about many of the trees. Only some were identified but it didn’t matter as people seemed to enjoy just observing the trees.

During the talk, one person questioned whether so many different species of tree should have been planted in the first place. That was an interesting question as it made us think about planting from the point of view of the trees. Could we design parkland that is good for wildlife rather than just for us to look at? At the end of the talk, I handed out leaflets so members could go on the trail another time. A few people said they would like to do their own presentations but wanted help with displaying the photographs.

After this presentation, I took on another topic that was new to me – “All About Pottery.” The talk was planned for Jan. 19, which was four days after submitting this report. So, I don’t know how it went, but I am thrilled to be presenting about a weekly pottery class I attended for three months and thoroughly enjoyed.

What I still need to do is ask the class leader and a few classmates to join me at the talk to share their experience with others. Rather than telling people about pottery, I want my photographs

and the pots we made to speak for themselves. Even if participants are not interested in making pottery, people might see something they would like to present and share. I am curious about the presentations that we all will be putting on this year.

Finally, I have seen something new about how I “present” myself. Perhaps how I smile, stand and move around would allow more for others than what I actually say. Allowing structural presentation to speak might allow deeper connection with people and my surroundings.

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#### **ENDNOTE**

1 <http://themanofthetrees.com/>

# TRANSFORMATION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CATHOLIC IN IRELAND

PATRICIA FITZSIMONS

I left the Roman Catholic Church at the age of 25 and came back to it 20 years later having completed The Landmark Forum.<sup>1</sup> I was formed as a Catholic at the start of the Second Vatican Council in a Loreto boarding school with daily Mass, singing and chanting.<sup>2</sup> My university Catholic experience was similarly inspiring and spiritual with chaplains imbued with the new future that was now possible for Catholics as a result of Vatican II. When I came out of that world at the age of 25 having qualified as a doctor, I was horrified by what occurred to me as the hypocrisy, misogyny and lack of kindness, integrity and charity of members of the Catholic Church, both religious and lay.

Although I came back to the Catholic Church after the Forum having distinguished my racket, I still couldn't accept how it was at that time; the sex abuse scandals were just starting to unfold. I became involved in 2012 with a group of people in setting up the Association of Catholics (ACI) in Ireland. We were committed to the pursuit of a reform and renewal agenda in the Irish Catholic Church in the spirit of Vatican II.

The association is committed to rebuilding through words and deeds a united church based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, a church that is inclusive, compassionate and accepts the equality of all believers by virtue of their baptism and acknowledges its failures. An Association of Catholic Priests (ACP), a group of reform-minded priests, was set up around the same time. Following the inspiration of the ACP, the

Association of U.S. Catholic Priests was set up. They were also interested in the transformation of the Church.

My commitment for the world was that the Catholic Church would be welcoming, kind and compassionate to people of all races, genders and religions. Initially, we organized talks to develop our community base. This initiative was widely welcomed with people travelling from all over Ireland to attend meetings.

In 2014, the ACI responded to a request from Rome to provide information on attitudes and opinions about critical family issues, such as contraception, same-sex marriage and divorce in the Church. This was to be included in the 2014 Synod of Bishops. An extensive survey among members of the ACI was performed and sent to Rome.

On March 21, 2015, the ACI submitted another document to the 2015 Synod of Bishops on the Family in Rome. This document was an outcome of people's sharing at an ACI meeting where people outlined the pain experienced at being excluded from the sacraments because they were in irregular unions, *i.e.*, divorced/remarried, lesbian/gay or married outside the Catholic Church to people of different religious persuasions.

We sent this submission to Pope Francis through a journalist we knew in the Vatican as we were aware that a lot of communications through the normal routes were not actually getting to the Pope. Of the people who shared at that meeting, 50% were Landmark graduates.

In July, along with two other steering group members, I attended the “Forum on the Family: Listening to the Faithful” in Rome, which was running concurrently with the 2015 Synod. In October of that year, four members of ACI met with archbishop Eamon Martin, primate of all Ireland, to enroll him in supporting change in these areas. We also met on a similar mission with Diarmuid Martin, the Archbishop of Dublin.

In May 2015, the Irish Constitution was changed by referendum with a 2-to-1 majority vote to facilitate marriage equality, the first country ever to do so by a popular referendum. This outcome was unexpected, given the traditional Catholic, relatively conservative nature of society in Ireland at that time.

The success of the campaign was based on the LGBTQIA community sharing their experiences widely. A significant percentage of Landmark graduates led, and participated in, the campaign. People in Ireland have been doing the Forum for the last 37 years, and the Forum and other programs have been available in Ireland for the last 20 years. Close to 10,000 people have participated. Four weeks after the Irish Referendum, U.S. Supreme Court Judge Anthony Kennedy, who had an Irish-Catholic background, was the swing judge who voted to guarantee the right to same-sex marriage in a 5-4 decision of the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case. Some people felt that the vote in Ireland had influenced his decision.

In March 2016, after the 2014 and 2015 Synods of Bishops on the Family, Pope Francis published “*Amoris Laetitia*” (The Joy of Love) on love in the family. In this document, he requested the bishops to shift away from blanket rules and toward case-by-case discernment. He also left the decision of whether to allow remarried Catholics to take communion to the local bishops.

This suggestion to open communion to remarried Catholics came from the German bishops and was passed by the bishops at the synod. While encouraging people to live up to the Church’s ideal of marriage, Pope Francis asked pastors to find ways to welcome people deemed irregular by church teaching, *i.e.*, divorced/remarried, gay and lesbian couples and cohabitating unmarried couples.

In April 2018, the ACI held a conference titled, “Future Families: The Challenges of Faith and Society.” This was held in anticipation of the “World Meeting of Families” being held in August in Dublin which Pope Francis attended. We held the conference to give those, who were allowed only limited participation in the families’ meeting, the opportunity to participate, *i.e.*, gay/lesbian, single parents, divorced and remarried. A comprehensive report of the meeting was sent to the organizing committee of the families’ meeting as a contribution to Pope Francis’ wish for the meeting to be inclusive and reflect the realities of Christian life today. It was also sent to Pope Francis in Rome, the Irish bishops and papal nuncio, a diplomatic representative of the Pope having ambassadorial status.

In 2019, we surveyed parishes around Ireland to see how many had effective and working pastoral councils. As we suspected, these were extremely limited. In October that year, we met at Maynooth University (where the bishops’ conference was meeting) with two bishops and requested that robust systems be put in place to listen to, and engage with, the church laity.

In 2020, Pope Francis called a universal Synod on Synodality for 2023, which has as its theme: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” Catholics around the world are being asked to converse, dialogue and discern to find consensus. Since early 2021, the ACI has been running a series of monthly Zoom talks on various issues relevant to the synod.

One of the more recent talks was by a Landmark graduate who runs LINC, a support organization for lesbian and bisexual women. She explained what it was like to be LGBTQIA in the Catholic Church in Ireland. Five of the 24 Irish bishops and one of the four archbishops attended the talk, listened intently for 90 minutes and asked relevant questions.

One of our ambitions is that each of the archdioceses has an “All are Welcome Mass.” Two of the steering group members are graduates of the Forum, a third member is doing it in February and most of the others have been to introductions to the Landmark Forum and are not choosing to do it at this time.

The ongoing issues still to be addressed are the fears and anxieties of the conservative Catholics who are very uncomfortable with changing their thinking. For instance, 38% of voters rejected marriage equality in Ireland and I believe that effort needs to be made to have people see the changes that have been made are compassionate and Christian.

However, my ongoing interest is outside Ireland and the United States. Of the 54 countries in the Commonwealth of Nations, 35 of them still classify homosexual acts as a criminal offense. The Catholic Church could have a significant influence here as they are predominantly Catholic countries. A member of the International Catholic Reform Network, I have visited Bratislava, Slovakia and Warsaw, Poland in support of their reform movements.

Transformation in the Catholic Church is slow, usually taking centuries rather than decades. However, I think having Pope Francis in position has allowed us to see much change being initiated at this time. I believe initiating change in Ireland can be extended through the hierarchy to Rome and other countries and allow the transformation needed in the world.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The Landmark Forum is the flagship course offered by Landmark and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs.
- 2 The Second Vatican Council was held from 1962 to 1965 and led to an extensive reform of the liturgy, a renewed theology of the Church, a new approach to relations between laity and the Church, ecumenism, non-Christian religions and religious freedom. Second Vatican Council. Wikipedia. Accessed Feb. 9, 2022, [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\\_Vatican\\_Council](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Vatican_Council).



# THE VISION OF A CREATED LIFE INCLUDING THE ONLY PART WE KNOW WILL HAPPEN: DEATH

FIONA PELHAM

*In 2004, when I took The Landmark Forum, my “aha moment” was “We will all die and there is nothing to wait for – life is for living today.”<sup>1</sup>*

From this insight, I took action on the dream I have always had of having my own business. I wanted to choose how and where to spend my days and use my life's energy on something I was passionate about. Before the Forum, that was an impossible dream. A month after the Forum, I had taken action so it was my reality.

A vision was forming for me of a world where people create their lives as they choose.

Since 2004, I have run a six-figure turnover business, employed people, led teams, worked around the world and delivered on my commitment to the world that “Everyone is included and everyone's voice is heard.” I am reliably known for my commitment and produce measurable results. For example, in 2021, more than 170 small-to-medium businesses made a commitment to be net zero carbon because of the work we do. This represented approximately 2% of all commitments gathered within the United Nations Climate Change Race to Zero Campaign.

I always thought my business creation was the fulfillment of my vision in the world. But, in 2021, I was given the opportunity to allow my vision to speak in ways I could never have imagined and would never have chosen.

In May 2021, I received a phone call from my dad who, undergoing cancer treatment, received an update from his doctor. “It's not good news, they say I have maximum 12 months,” he told me. I can describe my dad as the perfect example of a father, unconditionally loving, supportive, encouraging, helpful and one of my favorite people in the world to spend time with.

This news was heartbreaking but my immediate response to him came from my vision, not my heartbreak: “We are so lucky to have had the lives we have had and we will go through this next stage together.”

He replied, “You have always said we all have a ‘sell by’ date, Fiona. Now, we know mine is nearby.”

A week later, I moved back from Copenhagen to my family home in Manchester with my parents and began a different stage of life where I discovered that the knowledge of a terminal illness doesn't change the need for the washing up to be done or prevent the ability to feel happy while petting a dog or fulfilled when working on a project.

Instead, it provided an opportunity to live from the vision the Forum had given me, “Life is for living today and our lives are for our creating.”

Prior to 2021, death was an experience that I was not familiar with. The partnership that I had with my dad throughout my life laid the foundations for what I tried to imagine could be created for his death. Amidst a normal daily (albeit coronavirus times) routine, we would often speak about the future. I asked if he was worried about anything, told him that if I ever needed to find anything in the garage next year, I would be asking him in my head and expecting a sign, and kept reminding him "Just go when you are ready. You don't need to worry about us."

I read books to paint a vision for myself of an end-of-life that matched his life of faith, love, kindness and humor. He indulged me in things that were more for my completion than his, including reading a scrapbook of photos and acknowledgements for him and my mum for every year of my life (my Wisdom autobiography being the inspiration for that).<sup>2</sup> Together, we said, "It's OK. This is natural. We are lucky to have the life we have had." I was allowing the vision of people creating their lives as they choose to speak in the most obvious way – the creation of death.

Of course, we continued to be human. One morning, I found myself sitting in my childhood bedroom fuming because my dad accused me of moving his socks from his sock drawer since I moved back home, and he could now never find the socks he wanted. As I fumed, I was overcome with all my childhood triggers and then remembered my Landmark "aha moment," went downstairs and told my dad I hadn't moved his socks but I had done lots of other great stuff and I would rather he asked about socks than shouted about them.

As a British child of the 1970s, I was always taught that I was not allowed to answer back to your parents. In this moment, I broke a lifelong self-imposed ban of speaking and spoke honestly. The triggers and desire to fume disappeared, and, to mark that completion, my dad took my mum and I out for a drink in a tiny pub deep in the English countryside where we could sit outside on cobbled stones surrounded by greenery and enjoy the final hours of an English summer day.

My dad spent the final week of his life in a hospital bed in our rearranged family dining room. Months

before he said, "I think I will die at home, won't I?" As a family, we worked in partnership with the hospital to make that happen. I struggle to find the words that describe that final week and the contribution it made to the person I am today. Unfortunately, I don't think we have the language to speak of the "beauty" of death.

Maybe because so much of what was special during that week went beyond language. As my dad's language disappeared, our ability to connect and be with each other did not. One morning, as I was smiling and being with him, his face broke into the most beautiful smile that spoke a lifetime of words to me. In that moment, I experienced, in a new way, the humor, love, comfort and support that had always existed between us. I don't know the words to use and the order to put them in to bring to life the depth and gift of that moment.

My dad died peacefully in the early hours of Sept. 24, 2021. For the first time, I experienced the vision of life I lived with since the Forum, the vision of a world where people create their lives as they choose in a new way. I experienced this vision as including death. That is a gift I will always be grateful to my dad for. I also see the humor (something my dad could be guaranteed to bring to the conversation)!

Death is our only certainty in life so it is amusing to think of the many years I spent acting on, and exploring, my vision while having a huge blind spot. Now, I have the vision of a created life including the only part we know will happen: death.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The Landmark Forum is the flagship course offered by Landmark and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs.
- 2 Wisdom Unlimited is a nine-month course offered by Landmark that includes producing an autobiography.

# OUR COMMUNITY-LED FUTURE

BRIAN HULL

*Yes, old age is the only stage of my life that I have not been looking forward to with anticipation. I have said just that and thought just that more frequently. After having been in the inquiry of old age for a bit, I can and am saying something new here.*

Enabling groups of people – specifically groups of people with different accountabilities and different perspectives – access to reaching a common and shared understanding of a desired future reality is a challenging, if not impossible, enterprise.

This assertion holds true especially given the way most organizations are commonly structured – whether in the business, government or civil society dimensions of our culture.

Even supposing such a common focus for action can be attained, generating a workable structure to achieve such a new reality is typically beyond the reach of groups with different interests and understandings, even when allied on generating a jointly held new reality.

What I discovered decades ago is the Future Search Conference methodology, which evolved, through trial and error, to involve large numbers of people in improving whole systems.<sup>1</sup>

I first encountered this methodology in the early 1970s. Having recently returned to Canada from the United States, I sought a community that reflected a resurgence of renewal in the Anglican Church after the inspiring shadow of Vatican II.<sup>2</sup>

I began to attend one of Toronto's oldest Anglican

churches, located in the heart of the city but hidden among the warehouses of the T. Eaton Department Store and just steps from the city's main north-south artery. Though this church faced a declining and aging congregation, it had an atypical social activist focus. I liked that. Soon, a new rector was appointed with the charge from the bishop to turn the community around, or, failing that, the diocese would sell the property for commercial development.

I quickly became one of the three trustees, a church warden, so to speak, in an innovative organizational design in which the trustees agreed to be guided and empowered by decisions of the broadly representative Parish Council.

Not long after, the rector suggested, and the Parish Council agreed, to devote a Sunday to a deliberative conference involving all members of the congregation from the very young to very old, and from all constituencies.

Led by a social worker, we used the Future Search Conference methodology. The social worker learned the approach at university. At the time, we used a rudimentary, but successful, form of the subsequently much refined future search methodology.

During that long Future Search Conference held on a Sunday, the congregation resolved to do what was necessary not only to preserve the church but to have the church contribute to the life of the city's core as a "People Place." The tag eventually migrated to the City of Toronto itself.

The outcome: we blocked a developer's plans to build a suburban-type mall that would replace old main street buildings and required the developer to hire an architect who had a people-centered vision of retail shopping. The story is longer than can be related here but eventually the process yielded the Toronto Galleria Eaton Center, the preservation of the church itself with rental property within the Eaton Center, a new square, height restrictions on new buildings to the south and additional property around the square to be owned by the parish.

I did nothing more with this methodology until late 1996 when I was living in Ottawa. I was invited to represent Ottawa's Anglican Cathedral in a training organized by the Roman Catholic Parish of Ottawa University. About 60 of us were guided through a mock Future Search Conference by Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff from the University of Pennsylvania, who refined the search conference process.

In 1997, I led my first *pro bono* Future Search Conference for my small rural Anglican congregation and then was invited to lead a Future Conference to involve all of the arts groups housed in Ottawa's first and repurposed courthouse.

Among the new realities designed over the three days and 19 hours of the conference embracing Arts Court's stakeholders was a new multipurpose building on vacant land adjacent to the old courthouse called Arts Court.

After debriefing the participants, who created flip charts that included the structure and mandate of working groups, I had nothing further to do with the group. In a self-organizing way and over many years, the groups pulled it off and the new high rise is a testament to creative, attractive, multi-use architecture. The building includes a café, classrooms for the university, the Ottawa City Art Gallery, creativity workshops, a hotel with restaurant, condominium apartments and more quarters for arts groups.

Later in the 1990s, working with a group of consultants for the Human Resources Headquarters Group of the Canadian Armed Forces, I was a member of the team organizing a three-day Future Search Conference for about 80 officers reflecting various human resources accountabilities.

Although I was not the leader of this team, I was the only one who had any real experience in organizing and leading such a conference. By the mid-2000s, I became the policy research and analysis manager of a unit responsible for federal pensions in the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

My position led me to help facilitate the Future Search Conference for the larger pension group that was led by a team from McGill University's social work faculty where training in the future search methodology is part of the curriculum.

As my volunteer contribution, I eased the understanding of my colleagues, paving the way for a productive and "fun" exercise and debriefed participants on the mass of flip charts. A couple of years later, my mentee led a successful Future Search Conference sponsored by the Federal Department of Agriculture and Food Production.

In 2010, I led my last Future Search Conference, once again for my rural church. In many ways, the conference was productive and fun, but failed to ignite committed actions although the ideas were there. However, there were too few participants (roughly 15), too little diversity (no kids, and mostly older people) and no representatives from stakeholder groups outside of the parish with broadly parallel interests, such as the churches down the street, general store, village pub and local politicians and interest groups. It is important to include stakeholder groups from outside the core organization for this method to achieve its best results.

Now, as an aging citizen myself, access points to the communities where I could offer to facilitate groups through the future search methodology are hard to find.

I have offered the methodology to the new bishop and been turned down flat. Meanwhile, the diocese did extensive participatory polling among aggregations of parishes exciting much creative participation. But, with a mass of gathered

material, the organizers had no plan or capacity to turn those ideas into reality.

The result was that an approach designed to generate grassroots creativity reverted to the interpretation and authority of a small organizing group of clergy who created their own summary of the results. In effect, this blocked the capacity in parishes for community-led initiatives and left a broad understanding that grassroots creativity and initiative are not wanted after all.

As parishes age and numbers fall, the diocese is migrating toward becoming a real-asset-funded community property developer for assisted housing and other very worthwhile community service initiatives.

Recalling the joy and sense of accomplishment I have experienced through launching community groups in designing their own futures, and once more out to participate in the public domain, I have become a “Johnny Appleseed” proponent for the future search methodology in our developed world context.

In the last three years, I have made three presentations to PROBUS groups which are made up of retired people on community-led planning and initiatives using a video of The Hunger Project’s work in action.<sup>3</sup> The Vision to Action Workshop of The Hunger Project parallels, but is not identical to, the future search methodology.

I follow this inspiring video with a brief tale of my successful applications of the methodology. I invite the groups to take a look and see how it might work for them.

Before Christmas this year, and before the Omicron variant of COVID-19 swept in, I made a fourth presentation to a PROBUS Group in a small town on the north shore of Lake Ontario between Toronto and Kingston. In this presentation, I more actively engaged the group in a wide-ranging discussion, calling the participants into dialogue, inspired by the method and training I have received through the Facilitated Wisdom course.<sup>4</sup> As soon as COVID-19 conditions permit, I will hit the road again.

(I wrote a book commissioned by the Lutheran Church in America, published in 1970, organized

around evidence of successful community-led development in the third-world; attended the launching of The Hunger Project in 1977; launched The Hunger Project in Canada with others; and retired as Canadian chair in 2012.)

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 [www.futuresearch.net](http://www.futuresearch.net).
- 2 The Second Vatican Council approved significant changes in the practices of the Roman Catholic Church, including the translation of the liturgy into vernacular languages to permit greater participation in the worship service and make the sacraments more intelligible to the laity. Vatican II. Britannica Encyclopedia. Accessed Feb. 7, 2022, [www.britannica.com/topic/Roman-Catholicism/The-church-since-Vatican-II](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Roman-Catholicism/The-church-since-Vatican-II).
- 3 The Hunger Project started in 1977 with the goal of ending world hunger.
- 4 Landmark’s Facilitated Wisdom course takes place during five weekends spread out over a number of months.



# A VISION OF HEALTH IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC – THE JOURNEY OF A YOUNG HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

AMANDA MING ULLOA

Being a chiropractor is a dream I've had since I was 4 years old. I didn't know what a chiropractor did at 4, but when I found out at 28 it was a perfect fit for the type of doctor I had envisioned for myself to become at that tender age.

My life purpose is to create a healthy and vital culture. Chiropractic medicine inspires me because of what it makes available to our body's innate ability to heal itself. But, in the first two years of practice, I was failing. There weren't enough people coming to see me to let me know I was fulfilling my vision.

I was doing all the things I was coached to do. I spoke to all the people I could and invited them to my office. I found that I wasn't the leader and influencer I thought I was, despite the years I spent coaching the Introduction Leaders Program and the leadership roles I took on during undergraduate and chiropractic school.<sup>1</sup>

I even went on a couple of outreach program trips to help communities in Mexico and El Salvador. As much as I've accomplished in life, I was not prepared for what it would take to start a practice, even with the help of a well-established chiropractor and his successful practice of 18 years. My job was to enroll and register people in this new community of mine into what was possible for their health and vitality and actually deliver on that possibility.

We created events for our patient's loved ones to come to, to gain interest and potential new patients. Most of the time, no one came. A few times, we had three or four existing patients attend and almost never did we have someone who was not an existing patient. Eventually, I had a breakdown. I found myself bawling my eyes out on the way to work one day because I knew it would be more of the same: putting all my effort in and not seeing any results.

Having a handful of patients on my schedule and no inspiration of new actions to take, I had hit my limit. I knew that I needed to do something completely outside what I had already been doing. So, I started looking for a new office to work in.

Shortly after starting my search, a franchised chiropractic clinic reached out to me and said they were looking for a doctor to work in a couple of their clinics. They offered me an hourly wage with a bonus structure that looked low, but fair, since I failed so miserably in the first practice I worked in. It wasn't perfect, but I took the opportunity to grow my skillset and expose myself to a different environment.

One of the ways we measured success was based on conversion percentages or how many patients signed up for a membership or package plan after their initial visit with me. I was pretty successful with conversions. Sometimes, my conversion rate

was higher than 80%, which was better than our most successful and tenured chiropractor on staff.

However, my retention rate wasn't as high. I learned my adjustments weren't up to snuff with many of the other chiropractors. I would get feedback that my adjustments were much gentler than what patients had before. Some would ask why I did one thing, but not another or say, "Dr. so and so does it this way, can you do that?"

I remember another interaction vividly when the patient came in to see me for the first time, but she hadn't been adjusted in about eight months. Her chief complaint was neck pain and stiffness, but I went ahead and checked her whole spine, as I do with every patient.

I see her pelvis and thoracic spine are also out of alignment, so I start my adjustment in the pelvis and work my way up to the neck. She feels tight, but her pelvis and spine are adjusting and I can see how it's making good changes in her posture. I get to the neck and I do my best to get the neck to adjust, but no audible sounds are produced.

I do some muscle work and stretch her neck, but don't attempt another adjustment to her neck. I checked her legs, which tells me if there are any remaining misalignments in the spine if her legs are not balanced. Her legs were balanced, so I said, "OK, your legs are balanced, go ahead and sit all the way up." She did not. She laid there for a solid 10 seconds and said, "That was the worst adjustment I've ever had." I explained that her muscles were very tight and I did everything I could do that I thought would be safe and effective for her and her legs were balanced, which means that even though nothing "popped" in her neck, the bone moved enough to make a difference in her body.

She then abruptly got up from the table and complained to the receptionist at what a horrible adjustment she just received and wanted a refund or credit for a future visit. In that moment, I felt as though I was failing and would not be able to make the difference I saw was possible for people's health. But, then, I thought, "I did everything I could for that woman and I could see the difference it made in her posture. I know she's going to feel better, even if she's upset right

now." I never saw her again. I learned that I wasn't going to make a difference for 100% of patients. I created that effective adjustments would make a difference for 80% of the people, 80% of the time.

Toward the end of my second year at this franchised practice, I became more confident and got much faster with my adjusting skills. I was seeing 30-40 patients per day on my busiest days and many of them were return patients, who requested me.

I learned how to use my differences to my advantage and communicate to my patients in a way that they understood how I was helping them right now and in the long-term. My patients were happy with their care and I never had another interaction like I did with the lady who said I gave her the worst adjustment ever.

Then, COVID-19 happened. Chiropractors were deemed essential workers, which was good for me until it wasn't. Business slowed so much they didn't need me for as many shifts. Although I was on full-time status, I was only physically in the clinic for 20 hours a week and had to claim unemployment benefits to supplement my income.

My schedule was not as busy on the days I was there either. I worked this schedule for a few months, but it felt unsustainable and as though I could lose my job at any moment. Being responsible and cause in the matter of my life, I found myself searching, once again, for a new position. This time, I found a busy, family practice, with an all-female staff.

My first day in the new office was refreshing although I had been in this position before. Being the newest doctor and building up a schedule was not intimidating. I'm now able to be with the fact that people will have preferences for which doctor they want to work with and I may not be a good fit for every patient that comes in.

I'm now empowered to refer out or fire a patient, if necessary. With the experience and confidence I gained over the past four years, it was almost easy to build my schedule up, even with the pandemic in full effect. I no longer feel I have to get people to come to the clinic. We are 100% word-of-mouth, and we see, on average, 10 to 15 new patients a week and 200 regular patient visits per week.

The practice owner I now work for trusts me with any patient I see. When patients come to see me and they say that they are skeptical or are unsure how I will be able to help them, I explain what I'll be looking for, how that will make a difference and everything I do will be intentional to allow their body's innate ability to heal itself. When I feel the spine, I touch with a gentle assertiveness. I ask for their partnership by asking for a breath in and out, then a quick, gentle thrust to the mid-thoracic spine, another breath and quick thrust to the upper thoracic spine. This often gets their spine to pop and tension releases from their muscles. Almost immediately, they are less stressed, pain diminishes and a sense of relief overtakes their system. The next week, they return and express how much better they slept, how much more energy they had and they are amazed at how what I did made that kind of difference.

# OCEAN VIEW, BABY!

BARBARA LA VALLEUR

It was one of those things. You know, the thing you've always wanted to do for as long as you can remember. Only you don't do it. Of course, there are good reasons why you don't take action.

Mine might be similar to yours. No matter what the circumstances are or what I'm stopped by or even what the "it" is, the conversations in my head go something like this:

"I don't deserve it."

"That is way too expensive."

"Maybe another time. Someday."

"I can't spend *that* much money on *me*."

"What will (fill in the appropriate name) think?"

Only that other time doesn't happen. Someday never arrives – at least for years – if ever.

That's where I found myself early in December 2021. As a facilitator, a custodian for the Social Commons and facilitating the January Facilitated Wisdom course (that will be complete by the 2022 Conference for Global Transformation), I'm on my fair share of calls during the week. So that particular week, numerous people had shared about the 2021 Year-end Vacation course which just completed.

I was reminded of my commitment for the world which I created during the 2021 conference:

***All people have their story to tell. They are coming off mute, sharing their stories. The world is listening.***

Coming off mute were Stan Carpenter, Jill Thompson Greene, Dave Hoon, Pam Prosser and Lorraine Telford, among a few names I recall. They were so exuberant in their sharing about the inquiries, experiences and breakthroughs they had, especially about Sandy Robbin's sessions.

I could relate. I had a similar experience at the conference in 2020. That breakthrough with my internal conversations about money enabled me to register for my first conference. I booked my flight. I booked my hotel. I was so excited to be flying to California for the conference.

Then the COVID-19 virus hit the U.S. like a tornado blowing all our plans off their foundations. I had to cancel my hotel. I had to cancel my flight. Since I had nothing to compare it to, I opted to attend the virtual conference since I already paid the tuition. The experience knocked my virtual socks off.

Wow, the keynote speakers, breakout rooms and art offerings. We have so many talented artists in the Wisdom Course Area. A group of us made one of the videos: ***Bingo!*** Several of my photographs were shown. I made lasting friends from different parts of the country. Yes, I will never miss another conference whether it's virtual or in-person.

On Dec. 8, 2021, I had another powerful breakthrough about money. I don't even know how it happened other than in the listening of others.

On that day, I called Dave Hoon who shared about how extraordinary the Year-end Vacation course was. Then he asked me if I wanted to register in the 2022 course. I heard myself say, "Yes!"

He registered me on the spot. I already had a conversation with my husband who, for his own reasons, did not want to go. I told him that I wanted to go.

As Werner Erhard says, "Up to now" I've been stopped by the money conversation. No longer.

Did I mention that 13 is my lucky number? So, I'll be at the 13th Annual Year-end Vacation course, November 28-December 4, 2022 at the Westin Playa Bonita Panama in Panama City, Panama.

I am soooooo excited! Would you like to join me? Go on, register. Just call. 1-212-824-3500.

Oh, and me? I've got a room with a view, as they say. It's an ocean view, baby!

# IF FLYING PENGUINS COULD TALK

ROBIN KERMODE

In a piercingly cold Southern Ocean wind, about 20 royal penguins “fly” through the water by skimming along the top of the water’s surface. They achieve speeds up to nearly 12 miles or 19 kilometers per hour underwater.

The sight of these magnificent creatures takes my breath away as those of us on the Spirit of Enderby ship approach Macquarie Island. Drawing closer, we can hear the grunting of fur seals, clicking and roaring of elephant seals and squawking and braying of penguins. This island is a wildlife sanctuary.

We visited here before lockdown in November 2019.

Situated in the remote Southern Ocean, Macquarie Island is part of the Sub-Antarctic Islands. It is a miserable place for humans – but a paradise for many species that love a rich ocean of fish, krill, other aquatic sea creatures and chilly waters. It is the only place on earth where royal penguins breed.

Macquarie is a restored, rewilded and regenerated island. The penguin colonies there were once decimated. Rats, cats and rabbits used to roam. Fortunately, those introduced predators were eradicated in 2002 after a 22-year effort.

Like New Zealanders, *penguins* occupy the margin of land and sea. As the Māori people put it: “*He kororā, he tohu oranga*—the *penguin* is the *sign of life*.” Pondering that bit of wisdom, I wonder: Could we bring back more penguins? I begin

to embrace a vision that we could bring back more *kororā*, or the little blue penguin, which is the smallest species of penguin found on the coastlines of southern Australia and New Zealand.

We land on a gravel beach. Some of the elephant and fur seals look up to check us out. After all, this is their home. The hills are bare and there are no trees. The gravel beach is scattered with coarse-grained rocks. Some “rocks” are camouflaged fur and elephant seals.

There is a lone chinstrap penguin sitting on the beach and small groups of king penguins waddling in the tussocks, an important and valuable plant for the region’s natural water supply. They retain water and release it gradually reducing the chance of eroding banks. Tussock also supplies a great cover for penguins in a piercing wind on the island.

Chinstrap penguins are distinctive because of black above and white below. They have a narrow band of black feathers that circle across the face and under the chin. King penguins were once thought to be the tallest penguin until 1884 when humans discovered a close relative, the emperor penguin. It was nearly 30 centimeters (12 inches) taller.

The king penguin reminds me of my middle son. He spent more time in the water than on land growing up playing water polo. The king spends more time at sea than any group of birds. My son likes to wear pink and purple. The king is colorful,

too. My son can stay underwater for long lengths of time. The king can remain underwater for nine minutes. A king stands tall and proud and can also toboggan. My son is 6'2" inches tall and loves a long waterslide, too. King penguins can also take a long time to breed. My son, I am guessing, will be like that. Kings have two egg-laying episodes, which they alternate allowing them to produce two young every three years. Both my son and the king are quirky, fun and beautiful.

We head toward one of the eight royal penguin colonies. A drone count tells us there are 100,000 royal penguins in this colony.

Royal penguins live about 15 to 20 years. They get their title from the distinctive yellow-orange plumes that start at the forehead and run along the sides and top of the head. They start to reproduce on average when they are 5 years old. They are teenagers at 2.5 years.

In the years before becoming a mature adult, a teen penguin, like a teen human, learns important life skills, such as where to get their food and how to survive on their own and as part of a community.

Renee Scheltema, maker of the movie, "Normal is Over," maintains that humans have about 50 percent of their DNA in common with penguins. Observing these beautiful, comical birds from a viewing platform above the colony, I could definitely see traits we share.

Two royal penguins push up against one another after one returned from fishing. Together again, they quiver. This could be interpreted as "You are my partner, and I am pleased to see you," and maybe even "I love you." I recall my husband returning from weekend trips away and me being grateful to see him home after looking after our three very young children on my own.

When we return from the colony to get on the zodiac to take us back to our ship, we see "the beast" named by rangers on the island. This is an aggressive New Zealand Hooker sea lion who apparently turns up on Macquarie occasionally.

He sees a penguin. Sea lions don't usually attack penguins, but the beast does. He "plays" with the unfortunate penguin, which tries to escape.

He takes it into the water, but doesn't finish his meal. The petrels, tube-nosed sea birds, swoop in as soon as they know he is clear. To me, this is a sobering reminder of how nature works and the circle of life.

Through the subsequent lockdown from the pandemic, I keep remembering my experience to the sub-Antarctic Islands. I imagine my husband and I are penguins. We are locked up in our house in Onetangi Beach, Waiheke Island, not far from the shore. Rather than visit the sea and forage and then return like penguins do, we visit the supermarket and return. I look out across the bay, and I feel sad for all the wetlands and tussocks that have been lost. I wonder what the bay would look like if there was a return of tussocks, birds, *paua*, scallops, mussels, crayfish, big snapper, *kororā* (smallest penguin in the world) and Bryde's whales. What if our bay was really wild like Macquarie Island and I was a little blue penguin?

What would penguins say about a COVID-19 invasion? They have been invaded many times over in 60 million years. If penguins could talk, I imagine they would say, "Keep nature wild and biodiverse."

My husband and I took this trip to sub-Antarctic Islands because we were interested in seeing a wildlife that was wild and biodiverse, particularly on islands that had been regenerated, rewilded and restored.

Since the trip, I didn't imagine I could be restored, regenerated and rewilded from observing wildlife and penguins as much as I have and that my stand for restoring, rewilding and regenerating the earth just keeps expanding.

A penguin flying through the water did talk to me. It said, "I am you and you are me. Watch me fly and you will, too."

# IT'S TIME FOR INCLUSION

SUSAN H. HOSKINS

## ABSTRACT

*If we, as a society, continue as we are, we will create a permanent underclass. It's time for us to discover our individual capacities for emotional agency and ultimately our collective compassion. It is time for inclusion.*

## CASE FOR ACTION

Last night, driving past a number of homeless individuals living in tents under a bridge that last year had no tents, I was moved to total exasperation. "It really has gotten to be too much!," I exclaimed aloud to myself. I could feel the pain in my body. Societies ignoring the needs of humanity. We have the resources, ability and skills to address the wellness of the collective, yet there has not been sufficient drive. If we keep going in our current direction as a society, we will, no doubt, end up with a permanent underclass made of over 90% of the population. That includes, most likely, you and me. Thrown under the bus.

It reminds me of a book by Thomas Hubl, "Healing our Collective Trauma," published in November 2020. He talks about how we treat each other as two-dimensional paper cutouts. It is not until we can see each other as three-dimensional holograms that healing or connection can happen. I think that we not only treat each other as two-dimensional paper cutouts but we treat ourselves that way, too. We sometimes put the paper cutouts in our wallet to save for later. Sometimes, we just

throw the cutouts away. They/we are disposable.

We are asleep. If we are asleep, then we are compliant and that compliance makes those in control have an easy life. Just think, we are marching toward 3% in control and everyone else in the underclass; our freewill will be gone. However, each of us has a great need for agency, our own personal agency. First, we have to have the cognition, recognition or awareness of Self. This is the foundation. Then to have agency we need freewill and emotional intelligence.

Philosophers from the beginning of time have expressed that humans have an inherent need for freewill. Indeed, it is inherent in each of us. How do we have freewill and satisfy our need for human connection? How do we begin to see ourselves and others as three-dimensional holograms? Well, it calls for an evolution; the next evolution of humanity.

Society is calling for an emotional "Affect" Revolution. It is calling for the ultimate attainment of self-actualization. It is time for agency, emotional competence, to find our ultimate purpose and attain self-actualization. It is time for the Affect Revolution.

When a need in the culture occurs and there is a critical mass of people who begin to address it, then the beginning of an era commences. But a true revolution with people *en masse* is still in its infancy. The Affect Theory has been around since the mid-1980s and the term "Affect Revolution" since 1985. Some people refer to our current time as the fourth Industrial Revolution. We are being called to a society with our full emotional capacities and a sense of self-actualization. You can hear the call. The time is now.



# TRANSITIONING FROM WORK TO RETIREMENT

PEG MILLER

On Dec. 4, 2021, I officially retired from my work at Options Recovery Services, ending more than 21 years of working to fulfill on Options' mission: "to break the cycle of addiction which causes homelessness, crime and broken families."

I wrote about that journey in both a long journal article and a report from the field in last year's Journal of the Conference for Global Transformation.

Knowing my history of difficulty in leaving a job and being complete, I knew that structures of transformation could support me in this transition. I loved the work. I loved watching people transform from hopeless addicts to people with great lives, many of whom were then making enormous contributions back into society.

I enrolled in the Inquiry Explorations Program, in which I listened to Stan Carpenter when he said that I might consider contributing to the conference as a way to complete my work.<sup>1</sup>

I immediately committed to participate in every category and was magnificently supported by the conference band of angels, who helped me fulfill on that commitment. I also enrolled in Partnership Explorations, putting all family members in my book, since my ongoing commitments in the world and work on behalf of the world often meant my time with family was second on my schedule.<sup>2</sup>

A year later, I am more than complete. I attend the online staff meeting at Options once or twice a month, just to be inspired by their work in the

world. My internal conversation is: "Thank heavens I am not there. All that paperwork."

I loved the work so much at Options that for the last two years of my time there, I didn't do much paperwork at all. I simply couldn't manage everything that the other staff did, including assessments, justifications and treatment plans. I managed the daily notes from the groups I led, but I realized I wasn't really doing my share.

Since I had been with the program so long and was part of the founding and development of the program, I was tolerated. I loved the work and the people, and the people loved me, too.

They still love me. I go to a recovery group for women once a week, just to participate as a woman in long-term recovery and be inspired by the magnificence of anyone who engages in recovery. In recovery, we call it climbing a "forever" Mt. Everest.

I sometimes attend a smoking cessation group which supports men just entering the program, because Options is a program that requires clients living in their transitional housing to stop smoking. I have been free of a three-pack-a-day cigarette habit since 1977, and love sharing with these men brand new to recovery that despite stopping smoking being one of the hardest things I ever did, I am alive today at 77, because of that decision, prompted by the death of my father at 65 from his addiction to both cigarettes and alcohol.

With my work at Options complete, life over the

past year has brought me amazing opportunities to participate.

I am now part of the Bay Area's Poor Peoples' Campaign and have even taken on learning to be tech support for the many Zoom sessions put on by the California Poor Peoples' Campaign.

I am looking forward to being part of the second Poor Peoples' Campaign in Washington, DC on June 18, 2022. I envision being on a bus with big posters marked "California's Poor Peoples' Campaign," stopping on the way to be with people committed to having a "moral revolution" in our country.

The last Poor Peoples' Campaign was in 1968, and even though Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy were killed before it happened, amazing things occurred out of that gathering, which was then focused on systemic racism, militarism and poverty. At that point in time, 25% of people in our country were poor.

I was among those and as part of a poor family. My parents had jobs (they worked at least six days a week). I lived in a home, thanks to the Veterans Administration loan. We had food. I had a decent enough education that enabled me to be admitted to Stanford University as part of "affirmative action" in 1962, a poor, little, white girl from an inner-city school. I had all my medical and dental needs handled.

I have learned through my participation in the Poor Peoples' Campaign, which is a national fusion movement, that currently, pre-COVID-19, at least 40% of people in the United States are poor and 51% of the children are poor. Out of my work at Options, poor now means probably not having jobs that support having housing, food, medical and dental care, let alone a decent enough education for poor children to acquire higher levels of education. If they do access higher education, they will be saddled with student loans that are astronomically high.

Out of all the transformational work I have done and continue to do, I enjoy participating and being part of a huge national and international movement to have a world where everyone is included, supported and empowered.

In addition to becoming part of the Poor Peoples'

Campaign, I have been engaged in a writing group once a week to support me in writing on a regular basis. That has supported me in again submitting an article for the journal and embracing all the editorial help I have received.

I began working on additional recovery by being part of an international program of support for healing from issues arising out of being raised in an alcoholic and/or dysfunctional family. I do my own recovery work and have joined the steering committee of Monterey Bay. I am learning to feel and talk about past hurts, to heal and help. Most of my life I simply ignored my own hurts by helping others. I am learning the truth of, "The truth will set you free." Sharing my experience, I have learned, can give hope to others.

I asked to take Landmark's Aspiring Custodian Training Program in the Wisdom Course Area because I wanted to learn to "listen to the end without anything to offer."<sup>3</sup> I have taken some ground in that arena, partly by keeping my mouth shut. I feel so privileged and honored to be in this body of people and participate with those people who come on the Inquiry of the Social Commons calls.

The biggest accomplishment for me has been to realize the degree to which I have lived a life of "having answers, searching for answers and pretending to have answers." I realized that nearly all of my life has been "in order to," and I am now able to see that "occurring" and ask myself, "What is my agenda?"

I also participated in the Wisdom Unlimited for the Arts course, since I wanted to live more out of my "right/creative" brain.<sup>4</sup> As a child, my favorite activity was to lay on the grass and look at the clouds. Fortunately, I think, I had depression-era parents who wouldn't tolerate such an approach to life. Their concern, of course, was whether what I would choose to do would make money to live on.

But, now, at 77, after participating in the Wisdom course, I have joined the Cloud Appreciation Society and can look at clouds every day.

In all my work as a physical therapist and addiction counselor and therapist, I maintained some creativity in program development, but much of the work required mostly "left-brained"

thinking and structure. In fact, during my 21 years at Options, my Meyers-Briggs profile changed with me engaging in more “thinking.” I relished being a visionary, and, at Options, I learned how much work it is, day after day, to fulfill on a vision.

It has been a relief to have a schedule now, which I look at every single day, and ask myself, “Is this what you want to do today?”

Since I was born in 1944 to depression-era parents, I adapted to the culture of being a “good little girl” and learning to please as a way of surviving.

At 77, I am not so interested in being a “good little girl,” and I am learning that there are more alternatives to that than being bad. Other alternatives, I have discovered, include, practicing:

- “Extravagant tenderness,” a term used in Greg Boyle’s latest book entitled, “The Whole Language.”
- “Don’t be a jerk” from John Pavlovitz’s book entitled, “If God is Love, Don’t be a Jerk.”
- “Neuroqueering,” which means identifying as neuroqueer and working to make the world better for disabled and LGBTQ+ people, from a former classmate Nick Walker’s book, “Neuroqueer Heresies.”

Finally, I am learning to surrender to the gifts of the universe rather than relying on my own limited perspective.

Last year, on New Year’s Day, I was wondering if any part of my life would return given the pandemic restrictions, particularly being able to visit family again. My husband and I, before COVID-19, had a schedule that looked like a rock band’s. We were visiting family somewhere at least monthly. Beginning in March of 2019 that ended for us.

Thanks to all the miracles of those working on the vaccinations and, since Bob and I are 77 and 79, we were among the second group to get the vaccinations. As a result of that miracle, we traveled in May to our older twin’s home to attend his oldest son’s graduation from high school.

In June, my husband and I traveled by plane to visit our younger twin son and his wife in Olympia, Washington. In August 2021, our entire family

gathered at the beach again for our annual beach week. We again visited our younger twin son and his wife for Thanksgiving and were in Boston for a week at Christmas with our older granddaughter and her husband and their three young sons.

As I write this on New Year’s Day 2022, I can hardly wait to see what 2022 brings. Embedded in communities of possibility, transformation and love, I am learning to breathe in deeply, opening to the blessings and joys of life, and, as I breathe out, being, oh, so grateful, to be alive, “just for today,” as I have learned in my many circles of recovery.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The Inquiry Explorations Program is designed for participants attending the conference who want to be in action all year long – to create a commitment for the world and begin the conversations to launch that commitment.
- 2 Partnership Explorations is a 10-month course offered by Landmark.
- 3 The Aspiring Custodian Training Program develops individuals who want to become “custodians” to lead weekly Inquiries of the Social Commons calls.
- 4 Wisdom Unlimited for the Arts is a special-interest course delivered and tailored to a group of people with a common interest or concern such as the arts or elders.



# LOOKING BACK ... LOOKING AHEAD

PATRICIA COLBERT

## LOOKING BACK 2020

We have arrived in Venice, Florida. Two months of setting up our new home and then COVID-19 comes. Surprise!

For the rest of the year Patrick and I are sequestered at home. I engage in Zoom events in Landmark's Wisdom Course Area and other Landmark offerings; with Sai Maa, a spiritual guru; and David Whyte, an Anglo-Irish poet. I shared what I learned in dialogue with Patrick to expand the inquiries.

At dinner every evening on our lanai, we had candles, music, yummy food, wine and good conversation. Creating Zoom calls with my Elders Wisdom group this year has been a gift – both in growth and connection.

On Dec. 28, my beloved husband lay down to take a nap and passed away. What now for this life in paradise without Patrick? Two lifelong friends whom I've been close with since my twenties came to Venice to share New Year's Eve with me.

## 2021

I'm participating in the Developmental Wisdom course and having amazing new inquiries and engaging in areas of my life that matter to me. Tobin White, who leads courses and programs in the Wisdom Course Area, asked me to define "friend." I said, "Fun, love and touch." I miss the closeness of a friend; a hug and pat on the back. This year's inquiry showed me my "not that" behaviors along with defined areas of a "fulfilled life." I'm continuously examining my "already always" behaviors to release and reset.

Still, I am withholding myself in gaining new friends in Florida. I reach back to New Jersey,

New York and Connecticut for my old buddies. Patrick provided it all. I didn't need anyone else. The year has quickly passed by. On Nov. 25, I celebrated my 80th birthday in Maui with my best friend and her family. Then, in December, I participated in an old/new course, "Caregivers – Project for Renewal," designed by Brian Regnier, who created many courses and programs in the Wisdom Course Area.

This course is not just for caregivers. (Regnier passed on Dec. 6. His legacy in words remains to encourage my growth.) Sai Maa's December end-of-year gathering offered four days of chanting, singing, dialogues and diksha blessings. A celebration of all that you are! I then received David Whyte's new book "Still Possible," a reminder that everything is available.

Along with the new year approaching came the reality that one year had passed without Patrick. The year has exposed my soft underbelly and vulnerability, which shows up whenever I am moved by a memory or the sweet sharing of another. Tears of emotion flow easily. No holding back or stuffing down feelings. That's good. It should be that way!

## 2022

The Developmental course continues in design so as to roll out the new 2023 course. I am still vacillating about volunteering at the new Venice Cancer Center. I'm holding off as all medical facilities require mask wearing. I'll get this sorted out!

I am thankful for being alive and living the life I am living. I am aware that my life is an ongoing act of creation, a function of allowing – allowing. As Regnier always said, "There is more to say."



# AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**ANGELA AMADO, PH.D.**, has led transformational programs for more than 30 years and has been a Wisdom Course leader since 1994. She leads Partnership Explorations, the Structural Connections Vacation course, and is the head of Training and Development for the Wisdom Course Area. She has also worked professionally in the field of disability for more than 30 years in various capacities, including national research, international consulting and government policy. She has authored key books on inclusion of people with disabilities into the community and conducted training across the United States, and in Canada, Australia and several European countries.

**ANNA S. CHOI'S** promise is to elevate humanity's consciousness by serving high-achieving conscious leaders to find peace in chaos, master their energy, and embody their brilliance. As a broke art major with zero experience or connections, she started and sold her first financial planning business grossing six figures by age 25. Burned out from the hustle and grind, she became an energy master, martial artist, and qigong yoga instructor. Her work has appeared in Forbes magazine. She has been a TEDx speaker. A mother who homeschooled her children, she loves to sing and play the ukulele, cook vegan meals, and dance.

**CATE HILL** did The Landmark Forum in 2005, was an introduction leader in Philadelphia for several years, and also led the Self-Expression & Leadership Program. She and her husband, Mark Sharpelletti, enjoy a beautiful home in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and love that they get to spend winters at their home in the Florida Keys. She has two adult sons and is delighted to report that they remain close to her and Mark, in spirit and in proximity. In semi-retirement, Hill has been enjoying having time to pursue her dream of being a writer.

**DANIEL KAMANGA** is the founder and executive director of the Africa Leadership Transformation Foundation whose vision is "An Africa that works for everyone" and a mandate "to create one million transformed leaders." He brings more than 30 years of experience to addressing Africa's widespread failures in leadership. His multi-sectoral experience in Africa's private sector (media, telecoms and financial services), as well as the development sector (micro-finance and agriculture), gives him powerful insights into what needs to be done to address the leadership challenges in Africa.

**DAVE FLATTERY** leads Strategic Initiatives for one of the business units of DuPont. He is a Six Sigma Master Black Belt and teaches and leads programs in statistics, data analysis and process improvement. This is his third year of participation on the State of the World Scorecard team. He has previously presented a poster and co-led a breakout session inquiring into listening for others in the domains of religious belief, agnosticism and atheism. Flattery is committed to thriving and prosperous communities and serves on the board of directors of the Santa Barbara United Way.

**DIANA PAGE JORDAN'S** career is a collage of on-the-air, on-camera, on stage and online accomplishments. She's on-the-page, too. Her stories have been published in a half-dozen anthologies, such as A Cup of Comfort for Writers, and in national magazines, including Writers Digest and The Costco Connection. As a book coach, Page Jordan uses her inspirational interviewing that she honed with thousands of authors for 800 Associated Press Radio Network stations, XM Satellite, BN.com, ABC and CBS TV stations and other media. Her mission is to communicate the truth, while educating, entertaining and inspiring audiences.

**FELICIA NAGAMATSU** is a business owner, real estate investor, inventor, wife, mother, grandmother, speaker, teacher and a coach certified with the Brave Thinking Institute. She shares the empowering context of Full-spectrum Human Intelligence. A belief breakthrough facilitator with Krohn Breakthrough Foundation, she is certified as a master rapid eye technician, with a bachelor's in science in business from State University of New York Albany. Nagamatsu's greatest success is a 40-year marriage with her beloved partner, Brian Nagamatsu.

**GISELE LAROSE** joined the State of the World Scorecard team in 2020. As an occupational therapist, her background in human development sourced many careers from clinical practice, continuing education presenter, and executive positions in rehabilitation and now higher education. Her current commitment is to listen for our power to create as human beings. After attending three Conferences for Global Transformation and 22 years of learning ontology, she is sourcing a nonprofit organization dedicated to facilitating "bringing all minds on deck" to innovate student success.

**HILARY BURNS** is a graduate of the Wharton Business School. She has more than 30 years of experience consulting for international businesses and individuals. She is committed to people being free to create lives they love, be members of a world community, and getting and giving away their greatness. Her greatest accomplishments are raising her two children, Jesse and Haley, who are remarkable human beings.

**INA R. AMES** is a retired communication professor with specialties in communication theory, speech performance, theater, accent reduction and English as a Second Language. Ames was president of the Communication Association of Massachusetts for eight years and was chair of two divisions of the National Communication Association. She has been published, paneled, and programmed statewide, nationally and internationally. A participant in est/Landmark's work since 1980, she is currently a custodian of the Inquiry calls of the Social Commons, a former seminar leader and facilitator in the Wisdom area. She participated in both The Hunger Project and Holiday Project launches in Boston.

**JOHN HEWSON** is reinventing life on Canada's west coast, settling into semi-retirement following an international career dedicated to service and listening, enabling visions for business and community, bringing good ideas to life. Passionate about food, nature, art and community Hewson's focus is LGBTQ and First Nations people, skiing, kayaking and hiking, dinner with friends and discovering new creative skills such as pottery. Content in nature with his camera, Hewson is submitting his first paper to the journal, fueled by a passion ignited by injustices toward Indigenous people in Canada and around the world. Hewson can be reached via [NaturalGlory.ca](http://NaturalGlory.ca).

**JUDITH OWENS-MANLEY** is a writer and adventurer living primarily in Alaska with annual sojourns to the East Coast to spend time with family. A former Wisdom Course leader and seminar leader, she has a Ph.D. in social work and declares her work as a community-level practitioner, committed to people thriving as their best selves in the social commons. She co-authored a book on Bosnian refugees in America and has written about domestic violence and public welfare. A retired university professor and administrator, she participates on nonprofit boards when she's not skiing, hiking, sailing, or biking.

**KATHY NORMAN** works in blockchain and writes in science fiction. She is accompanied by her dog, Bella, who listens to everything she writes, mostly with her eyes closed.

**KET FOX** founded and incorporated Solutions Service Systems, Inc.,™ a membership organization dedicated to world peace. An engineering and physics major at the University of Arizona, he has served as a custom engineer, senior analyst, system design specialist and quality control manager for various companies. He did the est Training in 1977 and has participated since in Landmark courses and programs. He is also the author of the World Peace Project Source Document; The Abundance Project, A White Paper; and The Virtue of Negotiating, An Exercise In Principle.

**LORI WATKINS** was born in Santiago, Chile, in 1976. Adopted at five months of age, she was a third-culture kid, growing up in the countries of South America, Africa, Asia and the United States. As a licensed vocational nurse for 23 years, Watkins works with senior citizens in partnership with Complete Caregiver. As a creative expression, she advocates for mental health needs, demonstrating a vision of the future where the arts are desired. As an artist who paints using oils on canvas, art is a natural expression for her.

Originally from Bulgaria, **MARIA ZAHARIEVA** has been living in Sweden for 21 years. A clinical psychologist with more than 250 hours of psychodrama training and an undernurse with years of experience in taking care of and being around elderly patients in the last stages of life, she is also a coach, transformational consultant and speaker. She has participated in countless trainings at Landmark, including working on staff for two years and being the Partnership Explorations champion for Europe for five years. She has attended many other courses and workshops for the past 20 years.

**MELINDA VOSS** was a staff writer for the Des Moines Register and Tribune for 26 years, a co-founder and executive director of the Association of Health Care Journalists and the public relations director for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. Her book, "From Mango Cuba to Prickly Pear America – An American's Journey to Castro's Cuba and Back," was published in 2018. She holds a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in public health. Now retired, she became the editor of the Journal of the Conference for Global Transformation in 2018.

**PEG MILLER** is a retired physical therapist, certified drug and alcohol counselor and licensed marriage and family therapist. She retired December 4, 2020. She now writes, participates in the Poor Peoples' Campaign in California and is involved in Adult Children of Alcoholics locally and worldwide. She does outreach through her church and is involved with a county multi-faith organization to deal with economic injustices. A custodian of the Inquiries of the Social Commons, she and Bob, her husband of 55 years, have four children, 10 grandchildren and three great grandchildren. She lives in Alamo, California.

**ROBIN KERMODE** is a nature enthusiast, teacher and owner of Stories in Action. She lives in Waiheke, New Zealand, and has published a children's book called "Let's Go Eels," about the intrepid journey of long fin eel/tuna. She has also written activities for schools around New Zealand rivers and designed a board game. She is recently employed as lead educator for Rotoroa Island Trust taking schoolchildren to Rotoroa Island and conducting educational programs.

**ROSE GRANT** is inspired by a vision of a bright world, with healthy communities and vibrant ecosystems everywhere and is committed to potent climate action. Working with farmers and land and water managers, Grant has witnessed the effects of atmospheric pollution on lives and livelihoods over three decades. An early adopter of renewable energy, electric vehicles and regenerative agriculture, she is now exploring new opportunities to enrich environments, strengthen economies and build vibrant communities.

**STEPHEN W. FRANCIS** began his career as a graduate assistant coach at North Carolina State University earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and human resource development. He branched out into sales, business development and higher education. As a college instructor, he helped design curriculum at various universities and for defense contractors. His interest in human behavior and business led him to complete master's degrees in business administration and in clinical mental health counseling at Walden University. He currently works as a psychotherapist for a large healthcare organization. He has been married for 26 years and has a teenage son.

**SUSAN HOSKINS** is chief executive officer of I AM HUMANITY, whose mission is to provide expanded awareness, shifts in self-concept and highlight leadership that promotes and nourishes the flourishing of humanity. Hoskins is also founder of the Human Spirit Institute, which offers workshops, classes, coaches and products that unleash and foster self-expression and in-the-moment experience of a quality of life. She is committed to the declaration that is the Decade of Honoring the Human Spirit. Previously, Hoskins founded the Coalition for Economic Empowerment and served as chief executive officer for 28 years delivering programs to support low-income peoples globally.

**TIM HARTFORD**, a certified business coach, is a master at reinventing himself. Currently, at New Enterprise Forum, he works with start-ups to help them make their pitch to venture capitalists and investors. Writing is a new passion, and he's exploring how he can make a difference for those with A-Fib. A 2020 graduate of The Landmark Forum, he has taken many Landmark courses and assisted in various accountabilities. Hartford and his wife, Sara, met in the Introduction Leaders Program and share two daughters and four grandchildren. An active jogger, biker, kayaker and power boater, he lives in Michigan and South Carolina.

**WENDY KEILIN** is committed to creating the next world economy for a World That Works for Everyone. In a future where human labor is no longer required, what kind of economy could we create? Where a powerful few control much of the world's resources, what does equity look like? A transformational leadership consultant to high-performance teams and leaders, her work both led to this inquiry and provides a springboard for forwarding it. A 2021 Scorecard Team addition, she inquires: If transformation starts locally, how do we measure its emergence? Who measures? With what agenda? What could we measure? How?

# HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO FUTURE JOURNALS

## PAPERS

**Submissions due: October 1, 2022**

Journal papers up to 5,000 words provide authors with an opportunity to articulate their research, inquiries, ideas, practices, philosophies, views, work, artistic endeavors, successes and failures on topics related to the theme of the conference as expressed in the Call for Papers and Other Contributions. The journal will be published on the conference website: [www.wisdomcgt.com](http://www.wisdomcgt.com). A print version may also be available to order. For more detailed information on the 2023 Call for Papers, go to [www.wisdomcgt.com](http://www.wisdomcgt.com) and click on Play a Key Role.

## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD OR DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

**Submissions due: January 15, 2023**

Let people know what has happened in the area of your commitment for the world, what breakthroughs or breakdowns you have had, what you have learned and what has been discovered and achieved. Reports can be up to 1,500 words. For more detailed information, go to [www.wisdomcgt.com](http://www.wisdomcgt.com) and click on Play a Key Role.

## 2023 CONFERENCE VISUAL THEME

**Images are due: November 15, 2022**

The conference visual theme for 2024 provides Wisdom Community artists an opportunity to contribute their images to visually represent the conference. The image selected may be included on the cover of the conference journal, program, letterhead, bookmarks, banners and other promotional materials as deemed appropriate by the conference manager. Images are selected 18 months in advance. Submitted artwork contributes to the distillation of the conference theme. For more detailed information, and to submit your art, e-mail: [cgtcoverart@gmail.com](mailto:cgtcoverart@gmail.com).





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