

7 ACTIONS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

ACTION 1: A CRITICAL MASS OF DREAMKEEPERS – PASS ON THE STORY TO YOUR E-MAIL NETWORK AND INVITE THEM TO DO THE SAME

The starting point for the Great Turning is a critical mass of people who believe it is possible. As I took my tentative first steps to create the First Earth Run, I certainly encountered my share of cynics who said there was no way we could pull this off; people just don't care about such things. And even if we did succeed, the world was too far gone to make any difference. It was painful to experience such hopelessness. Fortunately that was not the norm. Most people were very positive. They told me this vision gave them hope and many wished to help in some way or other. Their hope and enthusiasm strengthened my confidence and provided me the courage to take more steps. Each step I took strengthened my resolve and ability to empower others with my growing conviction that a change was possible.

With the historic opening in the global psyche, this story of possibility can help prepare the soil for belief in the Great Turning to take root. This first action is so simple it can be done in less than 15 minutes. Yet it is profoundly powerful as it creates a worldwide platform for transformation. With the amazing global communication tool of the Internet, we don't need to run around the world with fire to connect and empower a critical mass of humanity. In your e-mail cover letter invite your network and others of influence to read the story and take the actions at www.empowermentinstitute.net/dream.

If enough of us take this action, within a short time, many around the planet will be connected and inspired by the transformative power of this story. This will help seed in the global psyche the new belief that a Great Turning toward peace on earth is possible. It will help generate the genuine hope needed for wholehearted action. It will also provide those to whom you send it an opportunity to participate. As each of us takes the first step, we become more hopeful and create momentum to take another step. Magnify this by many around the world and one can imagine the momentum that will build for the Great Turning.

ACTION 2: EMPOWER THE CHILDREN – PASS ON THE STORY AND INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GREAT TURNING TO THE NEXT GENERATION

The slogan created by UNICEF which hung in the UN General Assembly Hall during the closing ceremony was: “Give the World a Chance: Children Need Peace.” The First Earth Run was dedicated to the children of our world and their future. It was the children who opened the hearts of the political leaders with their plea to give them a peaceful world in which to grow up. Many children I met in war-torn parts of our world had lost one or both of their parents to war. All too many had also lost a leg to land mines. I was touched by how emotionally they responded to the torch. It seemed to provide them hope that adults just might be able to create a different kind of world.

The pervasive violence in today’s world has caused many of our children to lose hope for their future. Without hope they lose heart. We cannot allow this. The short-term goal of this action is to open our children to hope. The long-term goal is to help them

sustain hope by becoming part of the solution. This action helps them directly reduce a major source of conflict in the world: fear of others who seem different from themselves. As children all over the planet begin taking this action, they will discover the power they have to create their immediate world. This will start them on their path of contributing to the Great Turning. The torch will have been passed to the next generation.

As a parent, aunt, uncle, teacher or spiritual guide, invite the child or children in your life to read this story or read it to them. If your computer permits, with your children view or download the 15-minute First Earth Run video at www.empowermentinstitute.net/dream. Also suggest that they view the photo gallery that shows the world in all its beauty and cultural diversity receiving the light. Invite the children to open their hearts and let the story in. To get the full depth, after they have taken in the story, video or photo gallery, have each child tell how the story made them feel. This process opens the heart to our shared humanity and hopes for our world.

Then invite the child or children to contribute to the Great Turning by befriending and learning from those who are different from them. Explain that a major reason for the conflicts in the world is the fear we have about those who are different from us. If we want to create peace in our world, we need to overcome the fears that separate us. As more and more children in the world take this action, these fears will naturally fall away. Invite the child to befriend and learn about schoolmates or others in their community of different cultures, races, religions, or those who are excluded. She or he will need coaching – that is your role. Create time to talk regularly about challenges, successes and learning.

When the child has built up confidence and has success stories to share, invite him or her to pass the torch to friends to take this action.

ACTION 3: BEFRIEND THE OTHER – LEARN FROM THOSE DIFFERENT FROM YOU

For the First Earth Run to succeed many people of different cultures, races, religions, and political ideologies had to work together. This was not easy because our differences at times caused us to clash. Each time I was willing to expand my way of thinking and doing things, I felt myself getting bigger and evolving as a human being. I was learning how to include more of humanity's experiences into my world. I also discovered that although there were many differences, there were also many similarities. We each wanted to make a contribution with our lives. We each wanted to create a better future for the children of the world. We each were excited by the possibility to do something important. In the end, it was learning how to combine our differences and similarities that allowed us to succeed.

Our world, separated by cultural, racial, religious and other differences, needs many signing up for the great adventure of learning from those we might otherwise exclude. For the human experiment to succeed, will require us to stretch beyond our comfort zones and allow in other ways of thinking and doing things. We may not agree with the person's thinking or approach to life, but we and the world will get bigger and evolve through the effort. Do it for your own evolution, as a role model for the children in your life, and as your personal contribution to the Great Turning. As our fear of the other recedes, the world evolves

– one person at a time.

This action invites you to befriend and learn from the people who are different from you. Look for them throughout your life: on your block, at work, in your community – or if you are more adventurous – in another part of the world. You can take this action on your own or with a group of friends. If you involve friends, send them to this site www.empowermentinstitute.net/dream to read the story, view the Photo Gallery and discuss this action. If your computer permits, view the video at your gathering. To get the full depth, invite people to tell how the story made them feel. As in the action above with children, allowing the heart to speak about our shared humanity and hopes for our world is deeply healing and empowering.

Then invite each friend to write their answers to two questions: “What can I do in my life to befriend and learn from those who are different from me? What commitment am I willing to make to act on this?” When everyone has finished writing, give each person the opportunity to talk about what they wrote. After all have spoken, ask them to tell what they learned. Periodically invite your friends back to discuss what everyone is learning and to provide one another support.

ACTION 4: FOR THE COMMON GOOD – SHED LIGHT ON WHAT’S WORKING IN THE WORLD

We must transform the root of our conflicts if we are to create peace in our world, but that is not enough. We must also learn to consciously envision and create the world we want to live in, rather than be a victim in the one we’ve inherited. To help

catalyze this vision-based approach to change, we honored the people who were inventing solutions for the common good in each community we visited. We called it shedding light on “What’s Working in the World.” Some projects were large, some were at the block scale. They ranged from women in a tiny West African village hand-building a dam to irrigate the farms of their community, to a mother in a drug-ridden inner-city Philadelphia neighborhood turning her home into a recreation facility as a safe haven for her son and his friends. Each required vision, determination, skill and cooperation. What it took to succeed was rarely known by anyone other than those directly involved. Turning this hard-won knowledge, one of our planet’s greatest and most underutilized resources, into a community legacy was one of our greatest sources of satisfaction.

This action allows you to do the same in your community. Imagine turning your community or neighborhood into a living laboratory where young and old envision how they want it to be and then act on it for the common good. Where each success spawns the knowledge and inspiration to create the next and the next. Where the ethic is: “Everyone helps, that’s the way we do things here.” As communities around the world learn how to translate the imagination and good will of their residents into action for the common good, we will create the world we want...one community at a time.

Because we have spread this action successfully to many communities around the world already, we have a wonderful how-to resource for creating a “What’s Working in the World Program.” It outlines the criteria for project selection, a community event to honor the projects, promotion to the media and developing the

organizing team. You could take this action as part of an existing community-based service organization, neighborhood group, faith-based group, business, or create your own group. To download this resource go to the “What’s Working in the World” section at www.empowermentinstitute.net/index.php/dream.

ACTION 5: UNITIVE IMPULSE – CREATE EXPERIENCES THAT HONOR OUR SHARED HUMANITY

One experience that was indelibly imprinted in my soul was watching the millions of people around the world respond to the fire. Whether they were Masai warriors from the East African savanna, presidents of countries, business leaders, or young children, each reacted with a palpable sense of awe. Witnessing the fire that was encircling the world provided each a moment of connection with our shared humanity. For almost everyone, it was deeply emotional and uplifting. I have come to call this experience the “unitive impulse.” It is that yearning for a connection with other human beings with whom we share this planet.

The key to enabling this connection is providing a way for people to feel connected with one another around the world. This can be done through the arts, ritual, ceremony, education and the media. The First Earth Run was coded with the unitive impulse in every way possible. This included torch passing rituals, candle lighting ceremonies, musical concerts, dance, poetry, and poster competitions, following the journey of the torch around the world through the media and in classrooms. Even speeches of heads-of-state about our human connection and their aspirations for peace on earth. Several heads-of state commented that they had

never been asked to talk about such things and how ennobling it was for them.

This action creates an opportunity to help our community, place of faith, service organization, school, or any group with which we are associated, experience the unitive impulse. As more and more people around the world have this experience, it will create the connection so needed to live together in harmony.

A perfect day to have such an event is the United Nations International Day of Peace now commemorated on September 21st. On that day, millions of people around the world participate in activities dedicated to world peace and the celebration of our shared humanity. What better day to celebrate the unitive impulse and our common aspirations as a human family. To learn more about the UN International Day of Peace activities, visit www.internationaldayofpeace.org.

ACTION 6: HELP THE WORLD – CONTRIBUTE TIME AND MONEY TO ISSUES YOU CARE ABOUT

While there is much we can do personally to further the Great Turning, there is much that can be done only by specialized organizations with trained staff. This action invites you to seek out organizations that further issues you care about, and contribute both your time and money to these causes. During the First Earth Run, an organization whose work moved me was the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The First Earth Run drew attention to UNICEF's work in eradicating preventable childhood diseases and death in the poorest countries of our world. This heightened visibility helped them attract greater financial and

volunteer resources. It was a privilege to contribute to UNICEF's great work. What was unexpected, was how much this contributed to my self-esteem. I was so proud of my association with their important cause.

We have dug ourselves into a hole as a human species, and over the next several decades we will need to work very hard to dig ourselves out. This work must be done at every level, from the local to the international. Accomplishing this goal will require the efforts of all of us. Because of the severity of these problems, I anticipate a new planetary ethic will soon emerge. Our service, not just our money, will be the price of admission we pay to be able to live on this planet. It will also become the principal way we receive the esteem of our fellow human beings.

This action helps you express or take further the ethic of personal contribution. If you have found an issue that speaks to you, consider offering more of your time and money. Or, broaden your horizons and find other issues for self-expression. If you have not found such an issue yet, look for one that speaks to your heart, inspires you and makes you proud to be associated with it. As you learn about what's going on in your community or the larger world through the media, notice where you are touched. Move toward this and explore what is causing you to have this feeling. This is cue for you. Act on it. Seek out opportunities to contribute your time and money to the issue. Fortunately, most issues already have vehicles through which you can contribute. If one does not exist, consider creating it. As more and more of us step forward, one day we will hear a mother tell her young child, "Everyone helps, that's just the way we do things on this planet."

ACTION 7: THE WORLD HEART – PRAY FOR PEACE ON EARTH

A number of people I approached to participate in the First Earth Run spontaneously began praying for my success. In one country, a woman created thousands of peace candles with the First Earth Run torch logo and gave them to people to use in prayer. She invited them to put these peace candles in their windows to inspire others with their prayers. I am convinced that the many people praying for our success around the world contributed to the grace we experienced. A torch of peace encircling the planet with a fragile band of light was itself a ritual act of prayer.

Praying for peace on earth strengthens our collective aspiration and intention to create the world we want. It invokes the mysterious power of grace. And it strengthens our relationship to the world heart, inspiring us to care and contribute to the betterment of all.

Everyday at noon, in time zones around the world, millions of people pray for peace. One of the prayers used is: “May Peace Prevail on Earth.” As a way to keep this prayer in our minds and hearts, Gail and I planted a peace pole in our yard with this prayer in English, Chinese, Arabic and Hopi.

If each day enough of us pray for peace on earth and take some of these actions, a force for transformative change will be unleashed that the world has never seen before. Has the time come? My experience of my fellow human beings tells me that given the opportunity, they rise to the occasion. I believe the time

is upon us!

Each September 21st, the International Day of Peace, there is a 24-hour worldwide peace vigil. To learn more about how to participate visit www.idpvigil.com.

FUEL FOR THE JOURNEY

To contribute to the Great Turning requires heart and staying power. I leave you with a poem that deeply inspired us to sustain the journey we had embarked upon, even when it required us to run with an empty stomach. It is written by Bob Bagar, who served as communications director for our team.

WE CARRY THE TORCH

We carry the torch. Not for any special interest, cause or movement, but as a mission of the heart. The torch passed hand to hand, will wreath the earth with a fragile band of light.

We carry the torch. For ourselves, friends, loved ones, the people of the world and our neighbors in the global village, that all might be linked by sharing a commitment to the future of the world and its children.

We carry the torch. We can rejoice in the knowledge that no one is better qualified than we are for the task. With this torch brandished high, we can joust with gods, vanquish fear, rout despair and flash it as a beacon to light all the days ahead.

We carry the torch. We carry it also to honor others who have come before us. Who held it fast – for a precious moment to keep the spark alive before passing the torch now burning brighter with the passion of their conviction.

Of David, there will be one salient line written in the history books. It will say: “He brought a torch around the world in the 20th century. He would not let us lay it down.” Yet he, too, knows the vision is not his alone; it is ours for safekeeping.

If enough of us come to the realization that, “We want to make it”, the world will resonate with that truth. If we want the journey to continue, a new resolve will manifest itself. The torch dramatizes a decision we each must face alone. When we affirm the light, a subtle change occurs. We change from passive observer of the miracle of life, to a champion of its sanctity. When that happens we begin to mobilize others and the balance shifts in favor of survival.

If the First Earth Run does nothing more than bring a quorum of the world’s people to the simple affirmation, that we care, that will make the difference. It will be enough of a difference to preserve the future.

This torch is become our mind, our heart, our voice. The stirring accents of the First Earth Run anthem can be heard to the accompaniment of footfalls beating softly on the earth’s outer rim, echoing footfalls of other ears back to the beginning of time.

Let them say of this generation:

They had enough strength to carry the torch, enough courage to venture forth. The immensity of the journey did not deter them. There were a multitude of willing hands to sustain them.

Come ... let us finish this work. Let us celebrate together. Let us come to the banquet table where candles will be bright. Where there will be song and hearts will be filled.

Come to the feast as neither king nor artisan, warrior nor savant, scribe nor patriarch. Come only as a torch bearer. As one of those who brought the light and was strong enough to cross the borders of the night.

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Let those of us living on the planet in the 21st century be known as the ones who created the historic great turning toward peace on earth! I wish us all God speed on the journey.

I would be very pleased to know of the actions you take. We will periodically post them as an inspiration to others. I can be reached at: dream@empowermentinstitute.net.

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