

Your Turn

A Journal Uniting the Grassroots

"Indifference is a weapon of mass destruction" - Dennis Kucinich

April 2008. This issue's focus is the Earth Charter.

Contributing Editor Mike Ignatowski describes the Earth Charter and how it was created, and he shows how the Earth Charter and the Great Turning are connected. Perhaps the Earth Charter can be considered a reference work for people who want to be part of the Great Turning. This is an excellent topic for discussion.

May's focus is Creating a Vision. We are hoping to publish a large collection of personal statements about what the Great Turning means. Please send your statements (up to 50 words) to your-turn-editor@lycos.com Questions? Send an email and ask for a return email or phone call.

June's focus will be The Possibility (Chapter 2 of *The Great Turning* by David Korten). Is it possible to participate in the Great Turning if you do not believe the Great Turning is possible? Is it possible for an Empire to defeat a progressive reform simply by convincing the people that it is not possible? Is it possible for you to send us an email?

News, **V**iews and **S**tores - pages 3 to 4

Editorial Staff Expanding; The Your Turn Narrative; Indifference; As told by Elie Weisel

Links

The source of this month's quote, from Dennis Kucinich's congressional website:
<http://kucinich.house.gov/News/DocumentPrint.aspx?DocumentID=33675>

The Earth Charter, in English (PDF):
<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/assets/pdf/EC.English.pdf>

The Earth Charter

- Mike Ignatowski

“We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future... To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny.” – from the Preamble to the *Earth Charter*

The key theme of David Korten's book “The Great Turning” is the necessity of turning away from military empires and moving towards a common Earth community. But what are the principles that such an Earth community could be based upon? Certainly the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which was ratified by the United Nations in 1948 was a major step forward in defining a set of such principles. It is a very remarkable and admirable piece of work, but as primarily a list of rights of individuals, it does little to provide a larger vision of how to construct a sustainable, peaceful and just world community.

We are very fortunate that Mikhail Gorbachev and Maurice Strong initiated a major effort to construct such a broader vision in the 1990's. After several years of work by thousands of people in grass roots organizations around the world, the Earth Charter was completed in 2000. It has since been formally endorsed by thousands of organizations representing millions of people.

The Earth Charter is basically a statement of common ethical values that form the basis for a sustainable, peaceful and just world community. It recognizes our human responsibility to each other, to future generations, and to the Earth and life in all its diversity. It calls on us to build democratic societies that are just, participatory, peaceful, transparent and accountable. It emphasizes the need for creating sustainable societies and ways of life no less than fifteen times in the document. The Earth Charter ends with a call for a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. Finalized in the year 2000, the Earth Charter can be viewed as a hopeful preamble for the entire 21st century. For more details, see the Earth Charter web site at: <http://earthcharterinaction.org/>

The goals of the Earth Charter describe the Earth Community that David Korten has in mind so well, and does so in such moving way, that David Korten chose to include part of the Preamble to the Earth Charter as the quote that leads off his Great Turning web site at <http://www.thegreatturning.net/>

News

Editorial Staff Expanding

The Your Turn editorial staff has grown to six! Managing Editor: Bo Chagnon; Contributing Editors: Dave Nelson and Mike Ignatowski; Review Editors: Valerie Mapstone Ackerman, Ticie Rhodes, and Anna Kushner.

The target staff is 6 contributing editors and 6 review editors, so there are still opportunities to join the Your Turn editorial team.

The Your Turn Narrative

We are developing the Your Turn Narrative, which is a statement of purpose, an expression of the Your Turn philosophy, and a plan of action all rolled into one.

You can become a member of the Your Turn Editorial Staff, and participate in this exciting project! Email your-turn-editor@lycos.com

Views

Indifference

- Bo Chagnon

This month's quotation is taken from a statement made on the floor of the US House of Representatives on September 2, 2005. At issue was the Supplemental for Hurricane Katrina. Dennis Kucinich said, "The President said an hour ago that the Gulf Coast looks like it has been obliterated by a weapon. It has. Indifference is a weapon of mass destruction."

It was easy for the Progressive Community to condemn and feel strongly about the indifference of the Bush Administration. And it is easy to understand this, the last paragraph of of the Kucinich statement:

"As bad as this catastrophe will prove to be, it is in fact only a warning. Our government must change its direction, it must become involved in making America a better place to live, a place where all may survive and thrive. It must get off the path of war and seek the path of peace, peace with the natural environment, peace with other nations, peace with a just economic system."

What's hard is to ask ourselves if we are being indifferent.

Indifference, Continued

What is indifference? Oxford American Dictionaries defines it as lack of interest, concern, or sympathy; or, unimportance. I would add that indifference is sometimes a lack of noticing.

Elie Wiesel is credited with saying:

“The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it’s indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference.”

Strong words for a strong truth.

Shall we become involved in making America a better place to live? Or shall we be indifferent?

Shall we become involved in creating a future where all may survive and thrive? Or shall we be indifferent?

Shall we seek the path of peace, peace with the natural environment, peace with other nations, peace with a just economic system?

May your answer be, “Yes!”

Stories

As told by Elie Weisel

The story is that once upon a time there was an emperor, and the emperor heard that in his empire there was a man, a wise man with occult powers. He had all the powers in the world. He knew when the wind was blowing what messages it would carry from one country to another. He read the clouds and he realized that the clouds had a design. He knew the meaning of that design.

He heard the birds. He understood the language of the birds, the chirping of the birds carried messages. And then he heard there was a man who also knew how to read another person's mind. I want to see him, said the emperor. They found him. They brought him to the emperor. Is it true that you know how to read the clouds? Yes, Majesty. Is it true you know the language of the birds? Yes, Majesty. What about the wind? Yes, I know. Okay, says the emperor. I have in my hands behind my back a bird. Tell me, is it alive or not?

And the wise man was so afraid that whatever he would say would be a tragedy, that if he were to say that the bird is alive, the emperor, in spite, would kill it. So he looked at the emperor for a long time, smiled, and said, Majesty, the answer is in your hands.

It’s always in our hands.