



Joanna Macy turned 90 on May 2nd, 2019 — watch her most recent Bioneers talk on 'The Hidden Promise of our Dark Age'

We are coming back to life and this changes everything



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Evolutionary activism is socio-ecological innovation that drives transformative culture change. In *kairos*, this time of transformation that Joanna Macy calls the “Great Turning”, the personal, the collective and the planetary are intertwined more than ever. She speaks of our dual role, of needing to be both hospice workers of the old “Industrial Growth Society” (with its habits, structures and stories that no longer serve) and midwives of the new, the emerging “life-sustaining society”.

Macy identifies three dimensions of involvement with this process of cultural transformation. The world over, *we*, the people are engaging in: i) “actions to slow the damage to Earth and its beings”, ii) “analysis of structural causes and creation of structural alternatives”, and iii) “a fundamental shift in worldview and values” (Macy & Young Brown, 1998: 17).

“Many of us are engaged in all three, each of which is necessary to the creation of a life-sustaining society. People working quietly behind the scenes in any of these three dimensions may not consider themselves activists, but we do. We consider anyone acting for a purpose larger than personal gain or advantage to be an activist.” — Joanna Macy & Molly Young Brown (2014: 6)

In *This Changes Everything* Naomi Klein (2014) explores why the current system and, in particular, our current economic model is causing us to wage war against life on Earth. United in our love for life, we do *all* have the power, if not the obligation, to become active in changing this. The video trailer announcing her book ends with the words: “change, or be changed, but make no mistake: This changes everything!”

Video Trainer of Naomi Klein’s book ‘This Changes Everything’

Everywhere, people are organizing in holding actions, opposing further crimes and violence against nature and calling for an immediate and transformational response to climate change and a structurally unsustainable economy of exploitation, waste and inequity. Violently silenced, ridiculed and disenfranchised for centuries, indigenous people are joining forces with a globally networked movement of change makers.

“As Indigenous people have taken on leadership roles within this movement, [their] long-protected ways of seeing are spreading in a way that has not occurred for centuries. What is emerging, in fact, is a new kind of reproductive rights movement, one fighting not only for the reproductive rights of women, but for the reproductive rights of the planet as a whole — for the decapitated mountains, the drowned valleys, the clear-cut forests, the fracked water tables, the strip-mined hillsides, the poisoned rivers, the “cancer villages.” All of life has the right to renew, regenerate, and heal itself.” — Naomi Klein (2014)

There are many signs that we are in midst of a massive step change in our capacity and motivation for acting to protect a living planet and to co-create a thriving future for all. Non-violent direct action campaigns are gaining strength, proliferating and joining up. More than once I have cried tears of joy celebrating the widespread responses to global-local actions called by 350.org and Avaaz uniting human beings from all over the world in defence of our living ‘Home’ and social justice. Times *are* changing! People *do* care!

Ever larger sums of money are being ‘divested’ away from planet-destroying industries like the petrochemical, fossil fuel and agro-industrial giants. Institutions and philanthropic foundations are washing their hands of investment in Horizon 1 or Horizon 2- and putting their money behind systemic transformation — Horizon 2+ and Horizon 3 investments in restorative, renewable and regenerative alternatives. [The 3 Horizon Model is explained elsewhere in the book in detail. Click [here](#) a short intro.] Naomi Klein has come to a conclusion that I and many others — every day more — agree with:

“Only mass social movements can save us now. This means laying out a vision of the world that competes directly with today’s vision, one that resonates with the majority of people on the planet because it is true: that we are not apart from nature but of it. That acting collectively for a greater good is not suspect, and that such common projects of mutual aid are responsible for our species’ greatest accomplishments. That greed must be disciplined

and tempered by both rule and example. That poverty amidst plenty is unconscionable.” — Naomi Klein (2014)

We need to build on the emerging global-local movement of concerned Earthlings, *aligned with life* rather than with dangerous ideologies (like destructive economic dogmatism and religious fundamentalism). To do this we need a new story, “a story that serves”. Or better, many stories giving voice to an underlying cosmology and narrative inspiring enough to galvanize humanity into action, awake to the promises and opportunities of *thriving together*.

This narrative needs to combine intellectual breadth with spiritual depth of meaning and significance that transcend and include all religions and paradigms. It needs to draw its transformative power from infectious idealism and grounded pragmatism, technological innovation and age-old wisdom, helping humanity to act wisely with power and love. It must encompass the immanence of our experience as embodied biological beings intimate with all life, and the transcendence of pure consciousness beyond mind-body, energy-matter dualisms; the immanence of being *on* and *of* the Earth and the transcendence of being self-reflexive consciousness.

Joanna Macy on the Three Dimensions of the Great Turning

John D. Liu observes a growing call for a new collective consciousness among activists and climate scientists:

“By valuing life higher than material things we are coming much closer to the spiritual teachings of all the world’s great religions. This understanding is the next level of evolution for human consciousness. But it is not simply a profound philosophical understanding, it is a practical way forward to rebalance the climate, to create meaningful employment, to fairly distribute affluence and create an abundant and sustainable civilization.” — John D. Liu (2014)

The publication of Pope Francis’s *Laudato Si* in 2015 marks a historic move not just for Catholics around the world, but even more importantly towards an alliance of all religious leaders in support of creating a globally regenerative civilization in which all humanity can thrive within planetary limits. The Pope calls for “a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet” and stresses that “we need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenges we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all” (Vatican, 2015).

As discussed in Chapter 1, we need to recognize that ecology and spirituality are both ways to connect to and better understand wholeness and our participation in it. Once religious leaders facilitate a dialogue between their congregations that highlights their shared spiritual wisdom and values beyond the differences between religions, they can become catalysts of the transition towards a regenerative human presence on Earth.

The stories we tell as expressions of the meta-narrative of interbeing need to educate our systemic understanding of the converging crises and their root causes, thereby opening up perspectives on how to do things differently. Even more importantly they need to nurture our collective capacity for design conversations that create visions and practical examples of a regenerative and thriving human presence on Earth. These visions and ‘pockets of the future in the present’ will invigorate individual and collective creativity, inspire our aesthetic and moral imagination and offer everyone an opportunity for finding meaningful work inspired by active participation in the project of the century: creating regenerative cultures everywhere.

As we lend our voices, our hearts, our minds and our creativity to living the narrative of interbeing we change humanity’s design-conversation to the guiding intentions of

salutogenesis, the healing of the whole system and to co-creating win-win-win solutions in a world that works for all. As we join others in the process and learn together how to come home, how to design *as nature*, and how to cooperate in elegant adaptation to the uniqueness of place, the narrative of interbeing will unfold in its full fractal diversity. No longer one story, but a tapestry of stories in many languages, carrying the wisdom of cultural diversity woven together by the threads of life's fundamental interbeing, of diversity in unity, the pattern that connects.

Living the questions together is activism. It changes everything. As we become conscious practitioners of the art of living from our love for others, for humanity and for life — and others around us begin to do the same — we encourage each other to live in *active hope* and to bring forth a better world together.

“Active Hope is not wishful thinking.

Active Hope is not waiting to be rescued

by the Lone Ranger or by some saviour.

Active Hope is waking up to the beauty of life

on whose behalf we can act.

We belong to this world.

The web of life is calling us forth at this time.

We've come a long way and are here to play our part.

With Active Hope we realize that there are adventures in store, strengths to discover, and comrades to link arms with.

Active Hope is a readiness to engage.

Active Hope is a readiness to discover the strengths

In ourselves and in others;

A readiness to discover the reasons for hope

and the occasions for love.

A readiness to discover the size and strength of our hearts,

Our quickness of mind, our steadiness of purpose,

Our own authority, our love for life,

The liveliness of our curiosity,

The unsuspected deep well of patience and diligence,

the keenness of our senses, and our capacity to lead.

None of these can be discovered in an armchair or without risk.”

Joanna Macy & Chris Johnstone (2012: 35); from the book Active Hope, © 2012 Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone. Reprinted with permission from New World Library, Novato, CA. www.newworldlibrary.com

[This is an excerpt from my book Designing Regenerative Cultures, published by Triarchy Press in May 2016]

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Daniel Christian Wahl — Catalyzing transformative innovation in the face of converging crises, advising on regenerative whole systems design, regenerative leadership, and education for regenerative development and bioregional regeneration.

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