

Giving Life to the Human Family

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This is not an academic paper. It is a very personal text that tries to capture the struggles of my life in ways that embed them into larger historical contexts and filter out “lessons” that could be useful for others. It is a analysis of my life, which responds to the questions put to me by the Journal *Offerings* (the headings represent their questions).

This text is written particularly for the “Galileos” of our time. He was condemned for heresy by the Inquisition. His heliocentric view, meaning that not the Sun revolves around the Earth, but the other way round, was too humiliating a concept for the Church to accept. It took the Church more than 300 years to regret their conduct towards Galileo. He spent his last years in house arrest, writing his finest book *Two New Sciences*.

What I want to highlight with this example, is how the “Galileos” among us ought to tackle rejection. We are glad that Galileo did not descend into depression and apathy. Neither did he spend his precious time and energy on finger-pointing and indignation entrepreneurship. He did not allow the rejection he experienced to derail his life project. Instead, he kept his hands on the task, calmly and constructively.

I would like to encourage the “Galileos” of our time to follow Galileo’s example. I would be very happy if the account of my personal experiences in this text helps our “Galileos” to avoid losing time and energy as I did. I “lost” several decades of my life because I did not sufficiently understand my situation within the historical juncture at which humankind finds itself at the current historical point in time.

My earliest memories of what gave birth to my “vision” of a family

I was born into a displaced family from Silesia, which is now part of Poland. Together with millions of others, my parents lost their homeland in 1945-1946. They have lived in continuous trauma ever since. The loss of their homeland broke their hearts. My parents would say, still today, 60 years later, “Hitler has destroyed our lives.” My life and identity were deeply affected. During the first twenty or thirty years of my life my identity resembled a “black hole” of non-belonging. This is how I felt: “Where my family lives, we are not at home, we are rather unwelcome guests; however, there is no home to go to.”

During the first six years of my life, however, due to particularly fortunate circumstances, I was less touched by the fact that my family was a displaced family and that this was not a “normal” situation. When I was born, my parents lived in two rented rooms on a farm in what was then West Germany. Today’s farms often resemble modern industrial factories, however, this farm was still a traditional microcosm of people,

animals and plants – an almost self-sufficient sustainable world where few items needed to be bought from outside.

For me, this world was a paradise, a multifaceted exiting, comprehensive and inclusive paradise. Being a child was not removed from “real life” – the adults on the farm involved all children, without any discrimination, into their daily program. Somehow organically as it came natural, the grownups had an eye on the children who were running around the farm, at the same time giving them maximum freedom. I was part of this extended “farm-family” of people-animals-plants. I participated in all aspects of farm life, gave feed to the animals, sat on the tractor to the fields, and explored every corner. This world had no boundaries, or at least no boundaries that were apparent for me as a child. It offered me the opportunity to be a member of a safe network of relationships in a little community of people, while enjoying an abundance of freedom that allowed me to be explorative and curious. I did not lead the restricted life of a “planned child” in an artificial world of kindergartens or schools. I became physically very strong and agile and felt that I “owned” the world.

When I was six, my parents realized their dream of having their *own home* and moved to a small flat in neighboring village. For me, it was as if “life” was over, and “prison” started. My family joined what I felt was the *solitude* of the so-called *nuclear family* in a segmented society. No longer was I part of a larger community. I “hit the wall” of boundaries, of boundaries of various types, from rigid time structures at school and after school (no longer the organic biorhythms of the farm), to dogmatic life concepts and ideologies ranging from so-called “appropriate behavior” to religious dogma (no longer pragmatic solutions answering nature’s necessities) – and, not least, more than before I was touched by the divisions that war and displacement had created. The only connection to my earlier farm life was that my family – as refugees lagging behind the wealthier rest of *Wirtschaftswunder*-Germany – frequently used the forests and grazing lands around the village where we now lived to gather wild berries and mushrooms.

I deeply resonate with the conceptualization of human history that William Ury (1999) offers. He delineates two paradigm shifts, the first from *hunting-gathering* to *complex agriculture* ca. 10,000 years ago, and the second, currently unfolding, from complex agriculture towards a *global knowledge society*. Early hunter-gatherers lived in small egalitarian bands surrounded by infinitely abundant wild food that framed their lives in a win-win fashion. In contrast, complex agriculture brought hierarchical social structures and caught humankind in the rather malign win-lose framing of the finite resource of land. The emerging global knowledge society of today, says Ury, promises to bring back the more benign win-win framing that hunter-gatherers enjoyed prior to the era of agriculture, this time with knowledge – not wild food – being the infinite resource that renders win-win framings.

In my case, as a child, I lived like a hunter-gatherer on the farm (well, not as a hunter, but a gatherer). I was allowed to go everywhere and take the food that I asked for. Also later, when my family had moved away from the farm, we still continued to use the forests and grazing lands of our wider neighborhood for gathering berries and mushrooms and I always greatly enjoyed being a gatherer. In short, I loved everything that had “gathering” aspects. I loved the freedom and adventure of roaming while being connected with a community of people larger than a nuclear family, with boundaries defined by nothing but the requirements posed by nature. In contrast, I always suffered from human-

made restrictions and divisions. For example, I found *machine-like* approaches to life – as they are part of Prussian discipline – stultifying, since I had understood, through my farm-life, that human beings are related to animals more than to machines. And I suffered from human-made divisions, be it hierarchical divisions between *higher* and *lesser* people, or divisions between *in-groups* and *out-groups*.

Incidentally, refugees or displaced people usually are both *lesser* people and *outsiders*. Even though I was never mistreated for being the child of displaced people – at least I do not remember any negative incident – at some point, I must have learned from my parents to carefully keep my head *low*. Only fifty years later I understood that I was not the only one with a refugee background in the neighborhood, half of Hameln was made up of displaced people. For decades, I did not know that. When I grew up I felt that I was the only one who did not belong, the only *illegitimate* person among people who had the immeasurable privilege of having *legitimate roots* in the place where they lived.

Another element gave me a deep sense of anomie, already during my early farm-life that otherwise was so happy. I was familiar with the pictures and reports of concentration camps such as Auschwitz – I do not remember exactly how I came in contact with this material – I remember only how I was horrified by the atrocities human beings are capable of perpetrating. I recall how I was afraid, when I was five, six or seven years old, and agonized over this for years every night, that I would not be able to keep quiet in case I ever faced perpetrators of such atrocities and that I would be killed rather quickly.

Soon yet another factor came to make my burden even heavier. My family had adopted deep religiousness as a way to cope with the trauma of homelessness. However, for me religious dogma was yet another hurtful and unacceptable boundary, in this case dividing “believers” from “non-believers.” I could not subscribe to my family’s dogma, a predicament that started to become apparent at the age of nine when I actively but in vain tried to force myself to be a “believer” so as to become a full member of my family. Again, in-group/out-group boundaries (“believers” versus “non-believers”) and rankings (“believers” have attained more than “non-believers”) were painfully affecting me, this time within my very core family. I am a deeply spiritual, or religious person (both words do not really fit me and I always look for better words) but I focus on the wisdom that is common to all religions. My religion is *humility* and mutual caring and love, the kind of love – all encompassing while not naïve – that can perhaps best be described by the Greek words *agape* or *philia* (“love between friends” in Greek). I do not wish to attain “certainty” as to my soul’s faring after death, I am adamant to stand by the question marks about life, death and afterlife that are common to all humankind – instead of wishing them away or clinging to premature responses.

On the positive side, in hindsight, the suffering of my parents and the atrocities of World War II left me with an important mission, or a “life project,” namely the desire to contribute to “never again,” never again war and atrocities. This life project became clearer to me only during subsequent decades. In the beginning, I attempted to live a “normal” life. However, whenever it seemed that I was “on track” for “normal life,” it derailed. Only very late did I understand that my life project is larger than “normal life” – I could have avoided a lot of tears if I had understood this more fully earlier.

To summarize this section, my earliest memories of what gave birth to my “vision” of a greater family are connected with me enjoying the freedom and sense of community that presumably also characterized the lives of early hunter-gatherers. I recently met

Jacqueline Wasilewski, who confirms this view – see, for example, Wasilewski (2004). My life project of “contributing to never again” (war and Holocaust) was formed very early, however, I understood it only much later and grasped only very late that the first six years of my life actually gave me a blueprint for how to foster dignity in a global knowledge society – as opposed to violent strife, war and atrocities.

The intentional and serendipitous ways and events through which my family came into being

As mentioned earlier, my initial identity as a child of displaced people could be described as a “black-hole” sense of not belonging. Yet, I did not intend to stir up resentment and ultimately war against Poland in order to “re-conquer” Silesia and reinstate the Silesian culture of my parents. Not only would the price be too high (war) – the world and I no longer use land as a main resource. To formulate it starkly, I chose to *betray* my parents’ Silesian culture, accepting what Judith Viorst (1987) writes about in *Necessary Losses*. This I did, even though I love my parents deeply, profoundly resonate with their suffering, and would be overjoyed if their Silesian cultural practices could survive. Losses hurt. I did not let go of “my culture” easily.

However, what I thought I could do, without hurting anybody, was build *my own family*. For decades, I wished to have children, my biological children. I wanted to have *my family* so as to achieve the sense of belonging that I felt was missing in my life. In some strange way, my children were always close to me, from the age of 21 through to around 35. For example, when I took pictures of my adventures around the world, I showed them to my children, in my mind, and explained to them what their mother was seeing. My children were present, they were already there, and they were part of me. There was no question in my mind that they soon would be there for real.

I had a vision of my children growing up with the nurturant freedom of my early childhood. I did not want to press my children into stultifying restrictions and turn them into machine-like creatures in a divided and ranked world. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) describe my approach in what they call the *Nurturant Parent model*, as opposed to the *Strict Father model*. The Strict Father model produces what Theodor Adorno et al. (1950) conceptualize as the *authoritarian personality* whose principal characteristic is obedience and preparedness to blindly following orders, irrespective of their moral contents. This is avoided by applying the Nurturant Parent model. This model describes a parenting style that abides by human rights ideals of “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (first paragraph of article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Clearly, my “gathering” past on the farm had prepared me for human rights and for truly nurturing parenting. The requirements of animals and plants on a farm had taught me that liberation from oppression cannot be carried to the other extreme of “anything-goes.” Therefore I knew intuitively what Lakoff and Johnson write here:

Nurturant Parent morality is not, in itself, overly permissive. Just as letting children do whatever they want is not good for them, so helping other people to do whatever they please is likewise not proper nurturance. There are limits to what other people should

be allowed to do, and genuine nurturance involves setting boundaries and expecting others to act responsibly” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 316).

I was closest to my dream of *my family* when I lived in Egypt (1984-1991). I would have loved to have my children learn from the nomads in the desert and the farmers in the villages on the Nile which in many ways offered circumstances close to my childhood life.

However, despite of trying extremely hard – altogether for about 25 years – I ultimately failed to have my biological children. Or, more correctly, I lost my children – I felt that I lost the children that had been already there. Not having them caused deep pain, not the pain of failing to get what was not there to begin with, but the pain of losing something extremely dear that was already there.

Ironically, my aversion to the Strict Father model and its application to both parenting and structuring life in its entirety were among the factors that made me fail to have children. I had the loving support of my father, but was too much of a “revolutionary” to be palatable for potential male partners (and some mothers and sisters). My desire was to have children as a token of love, the love of their parents. Anthony Giddens (1992) expressed many of my views when he wrote eloquently about the new ways intimacy can be lived in today’s world. I did not wish to become pregnant through anonymous donor sperm. Yet, my ambitious vision of love, love between equals who dignify each other by merging care, respect and mutual recognition into reciprocal connectivity – this, underpinned by my yearning for freedom and equality and my life project – was too much too bear for the world I met. I might have managed to have *my children* and nurture them alone; however, my aspiration to engage their father actively and have not just *my own children* but *my own family* went too far for current historic times. I was “hit” by the boundaries of misogynist rankings of women as lesser beings, which, as might be expected, affected a “wild” and freedom-loving woman like me more than other, more docile women. One of my partners, who humiliated me systematically, put words to it: “Evelin needs to be tamed.”

I was rather attractive and carried the label of “a beautiful woman.” Unfortunately, this label hurt me more than it helped me. The label of a “beautiful woman” summarizes the status of a woman as a decorative object. Being the child of displaced people and being a “non-believer” had ranked me *lower* and *outside*, the label of a “beautiful woman” sent me *down* and *out* as well. Men usually were attracted to me at first, fascinated by my beauty, my high education, and “exotic life,” feeling elevated through the attention they received from a beautiful woman. I was an icon, a projection mirror in which they could shine.

However, soon they were terrified when they understood that I was so much more than a meek decorative object, namely a human being, a human being aspiring to be respected as equal in dignity. What initially fascinated them turned into aversion, for example, aversion against my “strange ideas” (Hassan Fathy’s architecture?, tofu?, futon? ...), or against the academic and linguistic merits I was in the process of accumulating (M.D. and psychologist with two Ph.D.s, as well as familiarity with a number of diverse languages). My deconstruction of what usually is regarded as “normal” was particularly threatening. For one thousand years, girls’ feet in China were bound. This offered status at the price of mutilation. To me, many of our current practices carry the same characteristics. We

accept mutilation in exchange for status without even thinking about it (our ways to design houses, furniture, and our lives altogether, to me, bear sorry witness – our lives are full of dysfunctional imitations of objects and habits of bygone elites). My disrespect for what is usually defined as status marker and my inclination to prefer less-mutilating practices and bestow new status on them, was stingingly offensive to many. All this threatened the tacit set-up that men are the ones to define life. I met inability and fear to negotiate and develop creative life designs as equal partners.

And, as could be expected, this predicament worsened by time. When I was younger and still inexperienced, I did not yet understand myself well and was dismayed at seeing me fleeing potential partners' too narrow life designs. The older I became, it was the other way round. Potential partners felt criticized and humiliated – no matter how cautiously and lovingly I formulated my views – by the broadness of my horizon and the extent to which I use to deconstruct what is regarded as “normal.” The few partners I found, either threw me out – one man literally threw me out of his house – or drove me away through humiliation. The more my biological clock advanced, the more I tried to conceal my “strange ideas,” but ultimately I could not hide them. At the end, I was almost ready to have children on my own; however, as I understand in hindsight, my life project interfered.

To put my biography into a larger historic context, one might say that I was hurt by the lack of advancement of the two core transitions that characterize current historic times, namely *globalization* and *egalization*. Let me explain.

Firstly, the awareness that there is only *one* humankind inhabiting our tiny planet is on the rise around the globe. Humankind is coming together into *one single in-group*. Anthropologists as William Ury (1999) call this the *ingathering* of the tribes of the earth. This is part and parcel of what we call *globalization*.

Secondly, there is an increasing awareness of human rights ideals. Millions hope that human rights calls will soon represent more than empty rhetoric and will render equal dignity to all citizens in this *one tiny interdependent global village* of ours. I coined the term *egalization* for the latter trend, to match the term *globalization* and at the same time differentiate from words such as equality, equity, or egalitarianism because the main point is equal dignity. The term *egalization* is meant to avoid claiming that everybody should become equal and that there should be no differences between people. *Egality* can coexist with functional hierarchy that regards all participants as possessing equal dignity; *equality* cannot coexist, though, with hierarchy that defines some people as lesser and others as higher beings.

Globalization is driven by technology, while *egalization* is driven by ethical decisions. If we imagine the world as a “container” with a height and a width, *globalization* addresses the horizontal dimension, the shrinking width. *Egalization*, on the other side, concerns the vertical dimension; human rights call for a flat “container,” for all of us to dismantle the high “container” of masters at the top and underlings at the bottom. As of yet, we still live in a “high container,” or in an *undignified* and *ramshackle global village* where millions suffer. Human rights defenders work for *globalization* to “marry” *egalization*, in other words, for a *dignified* and *decent global village* for all.

A dear friend recently shared with me how he went to prison at the age of fifteen because he opposed the colonial powers that held his African home in their grip. In essence, it was the lack of *egalization* in his social environment that sent him to prison.

By punishing critics, the colonial powers attempted to maintain a world of ranking and hinder egalization. Their globalization was one of forced coming-together under colonial domination. What saved my friend was that his close family supported him.

I also went to prison, only that in my case my close family were among those to build the walls and I was hurt by both, a lack of globalization and egalization. As discussed earlier, already as a child, I opposed in-group/out-group delineations that were defined by religious dogma or local identities and thus promoted globalization (or the coming-together of humankind into one family), and later I opposed the ranking of people, for example the low standing of “beautiful women,” and thus promoted egalization. With both initiatives I overburdened my closest social environment and was penalized.

One might ask why I did not break free earlier. It was my wish to have children together with a partner and not alone that kept me inside “prison” for so long. As long as my biological clock indicated that I could have biological children, I searched for a suitable partner, a partner whose world would be large enough to include me. Unfortunately I failed. My search translated into a lot of pain and tears, for me and others, first through staying too long in each “prison,” attempting to fit in – not least due to my tendency to also be intensely faithful and loyal – and then, finally, through breaking out or being “evicted.” Only when I reached 45 and gave up my dream to have biological children; I finally was “liberated from prison.” I was both, devastated and liberated, devastated by not having succeeded to have my biological family, but also freed, after 40 years of suffering.

40 years of experience with humiliation fostered deep rage in me. When I was younger, it combined with the “wild child” of my early childhood and led to periods of despair and anger that were both passionate and choking. It took me years to translate the energy entailed in this anger into constructive channels. Until I learned to harness this energy systematically, its constructive “application” happened rather by chance. During my global life – which was more than a safe travel from one international hotel to the other – I met dangerous situations. Yet, my potential aggressiveness, coupled with the physical agility of my early childhood, saved my life. Men double my size, intent on manhandling me, would have no chance (only people with weapons or special training – and I was fortunate enough not to be confronted with those – would have been able to overpower me). I remember one situation where even my eyes were enough. Once, I was 22, in the night train from Paris to Rome, a large man intent on rape, pushed me into the toilet. We were alone in the carriage – no help to be expected from anybody. I looked into his eyes, without making a sound. In slow motion, millimeter by millimeter, he shrank and retreated from me, fixed by my eyes. He did not touch me.

Going through anger and transforming it, gave me deep insight into the dark sides of human nature. I am not a naïve blue-eyed dreamer who believes that the world will be saved “if we only love each other.” I have experienced the human ability to suffer and to retaliate, so profoundly that I transcend this experience. It is not my lack of access to the dark sides of humankind that makes me hopeful, but an overdose of it, to the degree that indignant lamenting is no option for me anymore.

To summarize, the intentional and serendipitous ways and events through which my family came into being, were defined by my desire to feel a sense of belonging by being part of a family. In hindsight, it was “serendipitous” – albeit deeply hurtful – that my “life project,” coupled with my “strange ideas,” high education, and misleadingly attractive

appearance, foiled my desires for decades. In essence, I was met by a lack of globalization and egalization and this made me fail to have my biological children. As hurtful as it was, it led to results that I cherish today. It both freed me and forced me to recognize that it is possible to define *all humankind as my family*, not just as an idealistic dream, but in practice. Many subscribe to the ideal of *humankind is my family* as an abstract idea – years of suffering prepared me to adopt *the world as my home* much more actively than most people dare to do.

The inner and outer resources that enabled me to follow my dream of family

The world has become *my homeland* and I am a *global citizen*. I do not feel the need to fight for Silesia where my parents were born, because wherever I am, I consider my home. I am at the forefront of a growing number of people who are developing a global or at least multi-local identity and become citizens of the world. My home is now what William Ury (1999) calls the *global knowledge society*.

My friends in the Middle East are particularly intrigued by my approach, especially the younger generation. Franck Biancheri (2006) reports on his recent series of seminars and discussions in Israel and Palestine (mid December 2005) saying that “their elders speak only of land and states, while the youth on both sides of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is dreaming of mobility, of being able to move freely within their own borders, within their own region, within the world” (Biancheri, 2006, p.1).

Practicing to be a *global citizen* demonstrated to me that human beings all over the world are connected in their wish for recognition, a wish that turns into feelings of humiliation when this recognition is felt to be failing. I learned that the universal human desire for recognition and mutual connection can make me feel at home everywhere. Many believe that in-group/out-group divisions represent a priori incompatibilities and oppositions (“they” reject “us”). My experience tells me that more often than not are divisions reactions to humiliation that must not be “heroically resisted” but can be healed through recognition and by ways of actively seeking connection, at all levels, micro, meso and micro levels.

Actively seeking connection is what I do in order to make the world my home. I am the adopted “sister,” “daughter” or “mother” in many families around the world. I am never a *guest* – I have erased this word from my vocabulary – but always at home. I refuse to categorize myself or others with the help of potentially divisive identities, be it national, ethnic, religious, gender, or any other such identity. For example, I would not say sentences such as “I am a woman,” or “I am of such and such nationality,” or “I am of such and such religion.” The reason is that it is not my essence to be a woman (or having a nationality or any other such label): my essence is to be a living creature and a human being. All the rest is secondary. True, I have been socialized as a woman in Europe and have biological markers of a woman and European genes, however, as somebody once said: “You are ten men and ten women from all over the world in one person!”

Connecting back to my early childhood, today *I own the world* again, not just a farm, this time the entire *global village*. I never *travel* – this word is erased from my vocabulary as well – *I live in the global village* (in a village one does not travel). When I am asked “Where are you from?” I reply “I am from planet Earth, like you.” I define Russian

history to be as much *my history* as Japanese or German or Arab or American history: *all humankind's history is my history*. This entails that I accept feeling shame and disgust for the destruction that all humankind ever perpetrated. And I wish to carry the responsibility for doing something constructive about it. I feel responsible for not repeating what Stalin did, or Hitler, or any other dictator.

In the same spirit I feel proud of all the achievements of humankind, of all the great literature, art and wisdom that have emerged all over the globe. I feel responsible for protecting and celebrating the cultural diversity of this world – with the caveat that I wish to preserve and cherish only those aspects of diversity that are not divisive. I suggest that we let go of cultural aspects and spheres that can only be kept alive through violence (for example, I let go of my family's Silesian culture), but protect cultural assets that help us connect.

Admittedly, embracing all humankind as my family has often been a painful process. Such a process is like building a ship while at sea. It meant learning to *swim* and not to *cling*. It meant learning that life is a process that cannot be nailed down, on the contrary, that it loses its liveliness under attempts to be cemented. Not least the biography of my parents had taught me that security cannot be found by owning property (ownership is a relational concept that depends on the larger social context, otherwise my parents would not have lost their land), and security cannot be attained in the heavens neither, unless one accepts that this solution endangers life back on Earth (what if I feel that my deity pits me against yours?).

Recently, I became aware that what I do is apply a certain theory of intelligence and learning. Dweck, Mangels, and Good (2004) and Pascual-Leone and Johnson (2004) found that there are mainly two kinds of beliefs around - some people take intelligence to be fixed (they adhere to an entity theory of intelligence), while others think that intelligence is malleable (they adhere to an incremental theory of intelligence). Out of these two beliefs grow two kinds of goals, namely ego-oriented performance goals versus task-oriented learning-mastery goals.

People with performance goals wish to look smart and avoid mistakes, in other words, they have an ego orientation and try to satisfy high expectations of others by performing well. Those with learning-mastery goals, on the other hand, desire to learn new things, even if they might get confused, make mistakes, and not look smart; in other words, they have an intrinsic motive towards achieving mastery in the task (Dweck, Mangels, and Good, 2004, p. 42, Pascual-Leone and Johnson, 2004, p. 222). The research results show that students with mastery goals are basically more successful, they “are more likely to search for and to find successful transfer strategies than are those with concerns about validating their ability” (Dweck, Mangels, and Good 2004, p. 43).

I hypothesize that people with a mastery orientation manage life's challenges – including painful humiliation – in profoundly more constructive ways than people with ego-oriented performance goals and that this is how I survived decades of “prison.” Conceptualizing life as a process of learning was the cognitive strategy that helped me. However, adopting this strategy was not enough, in order to practice it I also had to learn certain skills. At six, I still had the best preconditions, but when I began to enter “prison,” I unlearned my initial confidence and *fear* seeped in. As I mentioned above, I kept my head low, not only as a refugee child, later also as a non-believer. For at least ten years –

from the age of 12 to 22 – I attempted to be *invisible*; I simply hid myself away. One of the results was that I became extremely unskilled in social situations.

However, at some point, I found the strength – perhaps by linking up to the confidence of my earlier childhood and through being “pushed” by my life project – to embark on a kind of self-made fear-reduction and social-skills training program. Starting in my early twenties, I began exploring the world, often deliberately not preparing much in advance – throwing myself into the unknown so-to-speak – in order to learn how to live in uncertainty and bear fear. Since my starting position was so dismal, the learning curve was steep, and eventually I overtook most of the rest of “average” citizens, because they are usually fortunate enough to never being forced out of their comfort zone. Thus I learned to bear uncertainty and fear and to connect to other people – to “strangers” – without having fear interfere. This opened up the *world-as-home* for me.

To summarize, the inner and outer resources that enabled me to follow my dream of family have to do with two adaptations that enabled me to *swim* and not to *cling*. Firstly, I learned to accept life as a process – not a fixed state – and failure as a valuable part of the fullness of life. Secondly, I learned the skills to tackle the fear that usually hampers *swimming* and forecloses connecting with “strangers.”

My family today – its size, form, and essence, as well as routines and rituals

My personal life story has unfolded in the course of several decades of international experience in the service of my life project – even though, at first, I was not very aware of this life project and it looks as if it steered me, for a long time, rather than the other way round. As I understood only later, my aim was to learn as much as possible about humankind in order to find ways to build a more dignified world. I wanted to learn how humans in different cultures define and live love and hatred, war and peace, conflict and conflict resolution, and so forth. I did not wish to “visit other cultures” but become part of them as much as possible. From 1974 to 1984, I studied and worked in New Zealand, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Israel, West Africa, USA, Germany, and Norway, as a student of both psychology and of medicine, learning about the world’s cultures and languages. Eventually, I learned to handle about 12 languages to various degrees. If one considers planet Earth to be a book, I tried to read the contents list.

From 1984 to 1987, I opened one chapter of “book Earth” in more depth, namely the chapter “Arab World.” I was first a psychological counselor and clinical psychologist at the American University in Cairo, till 1987, and then had my own private practice in Cairo, from 1987 to 1991. I offered counseling in English, French, German, Norwegian, and, in time, also in Egyptian-Arabic. My clients came from diverse cultural backgrounds, many from the expatriate community in Cairo – Americans, Europeans, Scandinavians, Palestinians, and citizens of other African countries – as well as from the local community, both Western-oriented, and traditionally-oriented Egyptians. Part of my work was “*culture-counseling*,” meaning that foreign companies working in Egypt asked me for my support in understanding Egyptian culture, Arab culture, and Islam.

From 1991 to 1994, I wrote my doctoral dissertation in social medicine about quality of life, or how a “good life” is being defined in Germany as compared to Egypt. I

furthermore collected experience as a politician and activist (see www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin.php).

During my interviews for this doctoral research, I became aware to which extent my global quest had changed me. I had developed a “sense of global responsibility” that was not just theoretical, but deeply intuitive. It was the intuition that we, humankind, are jointly responsibly for our tiny planet, and that the wealthy inhabitants of this planet carry extra responsibility. My European interview partners did not seem to have the same intuition at all. I met the following view continuously: “‘We’ have tried humanitarian aid to the poor of the world and it did not work. Now ‘they’ have to find their way out of their problems on their own.” People with this view forget that “the problems of the poor” are “everybody’s problems” and that we cannot just turn our backs on the world, lest its problems will haunt us. I was flabbergasted and thought: How come that the wealthy use their time and resources on trivialities and expect that those who lack everything save our world? How should I express what I have learned? And what was it exactly that I have learned?

From 1991 to 1994, I “tried” politics and activism. I became Candidate for the European Parliament in Hamburg for a small party at the center of the political spectrum, this was in 1994, however I left this party soon after, since I cannot really identify with any party in the political world. So, this was my “excursion” into politics.

In 1993, I founded the NGO Better Global Understanding in Hamburg, North Germany, and organized a festival with 20 000 participants under the motto “Global Responsibility” (www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin03.php). Organizing this festival was an exhilarating and extreme activist experience, however, I abandoned activism as well as politics, since I felt that I needed to think more deeply and comprehensively through the problems and potential solutions for our world. For two or three years, I searched for the core question that would guide my life project into its next phase. The question emerged, namely “What is the strongest force that hinders what humankind needs most to solve common global problems, namely cooperation?” My intuition told me that humiliation might represent this force. During my time as a clinical psychologist, I had experienced the destructive effects of humiliation at the micro level, namely how families cannot be reconciled who have cycles of humiliation ripping through them, and at the macro level, European history tells us that humiliating Germany after World War I, through the Versailles Treaties, lead to war, while respecting Germany, through the Marshal Plan, after World War II, lead to peace.

In 1996, I began with my current social psychological research, initially with a four-year doctoral research project in social psychology – see Lindner (2000) – entitled *The Feeling of Being Humiliated: A Central Theme in Armed Conflicts. A Study of the Role of Humiliation in Somalia, and Rwanda/Burundi, Between the Warring Parties, and in Relation to Third Intervening Parties*.

Since 2001, I dedicate my time to developing a *theory of humiliation* and promoting *humiliation studies* as a new global and transdisciplinary field – please see Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies, HumanDHS, <http://www.humiliationstudies.org>, and Lindner (2006).

I feel that at the current point in time, all loose ends of my life come together. My life project increasingly “unveils” itself and becomes clearer. What were the intuitions of a “wild child” turn now into the thought-through theory of an adult. It is with pride and

theoretical and practical backing that I say today that *my family is all humankind*. I embrace it with *agape* and *philia*. Martin Buber (1944) developed a *philosophy of dialogue* with which I resonate deeply. It views human existence in two fundamentally different kinds of relationships – *I-It* and *I-Thou*. An *I-It* relationship is the normal everyday relation of a human being towards the things surrounding her. Fellow human beings may also be treated as *Its*, from a distance, as parts of the environment. An *I-Thou* relationship, however, is one into which a human being enters with her innermost and whole being, yielding genuine encounters and dialogues. *I-Thou* meetings are in Buber’s eyes reflections of the human meeting with God. Also Emmanuel Lévinas (1961) has worked on dialogue and caring. Lévinas’s first magnum opus, *Totality and Infinity* analyzes the *face-to-face* relationship with *the other*, the fellow human being.

Since I cannot know every human being on Earth personally, my loving embrace of all humankind represents an offer that is translated into an actual embrace for those with whom I have established a closer relationship. I have many loved ones all around the globe, many hundreds in outer circles around a dear core. I do not distinguish between *family* and *friends* and *colleagues*. Humankind is my family and those who are close to me are part of this family. I am never lonely, I no longer feel anomie – my family anchors me in this world. For me, loving all humankind – including all weaknesses and handicaps, which I clearly acknowledge – gives my life meaning and fullness.

I design my life as a global nomad, in order to build our Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network globally. People ask me, “But where is your base?” or “Where do you work?” I reply that have no one-base house or flat of my own, but many. I accept the hospitality of my global family. I usually do not stay in one place longer than a couple of months, but usually return faithfully every year or so. Thus, my life is enriched by being part of many cultural settings and by seeing the world from many perspectives. In a way I live many parallel lives. I never freeze in one world-view, but always unsettle myself. As a result, I usually understand all sides, not just theoretically but with deep empathy. Recent “cartoon wars” or the “Iraq war,” are but two examples. I have turned into a living “culture-bridge.”

Where do I work? Several universities have asked me to apply for full professorships. I decline. I do not wish to be tied to one place but wish to keep my global freedom. I prefer to have a patchwork of global part-time or guest-professor affiliations (Columbia University, New York; Maison de Science de l’Homme, Paris; Oslo University, Norway; the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim; International Christian University and Rikkyo University, Tokyo; Hebrew University, Jerusalem; and so forth). Clearly, this means that I do not earn much money (admittedly, the situation is a bit too tight at times). In order to make this kind of life work, I have minimized cost, and I am offered support “in kind” wherever I stay. I live paperless and digital, with a minimum of material possessions.

I usually meet our network members personally and connect with them, and then we have two group meetings per year. Modern technology, internet and email help me maintain intense personal encounters and make them sustainable even when we are thousands of kilometers apart. I invest ca. five hours per day to reply to ca. 100 emails and maintain our website and the rest I use on networking, teaching and writing.

To summarize this section, my family today – its size, form, and essence, as well as routines and rituals – is a global family of all humankind with those I have connected

with in inner circles. The same technology that drives globalization also helps us to stay close even when we are geographically apart. My global life is feasible because I define my global family in ways *family* usually is defined, namely as *my home where I am welcome and can stay*.

Unique challenges

The world believes that Germans during World War II ought to have stood *up* and not *by* when Jews were transported away. 6 million people died in the Holocaust. Today, 12 million children die each year before they are 5 years old, of preventable diseases and poverty. I identify with that. I accept this global challenge as my personal challenge. Furthermore, global exploitation of resources and the destructive effects of the way we use them makes our world unlivable for coming generations. I do not want to stand by. And in order to stand up, I identify with all humankind as my first priority, as my home, and relegate all “local” identities to a second plane. In order to stand up, I do my utmost to design my life as a global citizen and try to do whatever I can to protect my family. This orientation not only heals my wounds from feeling homeless, but also leads me to believe that my experiences may be helpful to others and stimulate fruitful visions for a sustainable future world.

Philosopher Avishai Margalit (1996) describes such a vision in his book entitled *The Decent Society*, where he calls for societies to build institutions that no longer humiliate their citizens. I call for a *decent global village* harnessed by a *Moratorium on Humiliation*. I believe that there is an extremely important role for the international community – all of us – and that we need to become more active and facilitate constructive social change towards a *decent global village* which includes all citizens of the world in dignified ways. I invite everybody to abandon the essentialization of local identities or national borders and adopt a global identity that binds global diversities together constructively and prevents them from becoming divisive.

I am aware that this challenge is difficult to face. Many are not able to grasp that the interdependence of today’s world calls for unique solutions that no generation before us ever had to consider. Today’s unprecedented interdependence transforms what formerly was safety into false security. In-group belonging provides in-group members with strength and a sense of safety, but ultimately it makes the world unsafe because it divides a world that needs to cooperate as *one single in-group* to tackle global problems. This insight is difficult to accept for many. The world is facing an emergency crisis and human adaptability might be too slow.

Michio Kaku (2005), renowned physicist, concludes his book on *Parallel Worlds* with the following paragraph:

The generation now alive is perhaps the most important generation of humans ever to walk the Earth. Unlike previous generations, we hold in our hands the future destiny of our species, whether we soar into fulfilling our promise as a type I civilization [able to create a sustainable future for our planet] or fall into the abyss of chaos, pollution, and war. Decisions made by us will reverberate throughout this century. How we resolve global wars, proliferating nuclear weapons, and sectarian and ethnic strife will either lay or destroy the foundations of a type I civilization. Perhaps the purpose and

meaning of the current generation are to make sure that the transition to a type I civilization is a smooth one. The choice is ours. This is the legacy of the generation now alive. This is our destiny (Kaku, 2005, p. 361).

I coined the motto “Pessimism is a luxury we can afford only in good times; in difficult times it easily represents a self-inflicted, self-fulfilling death sentence.” Or, “Turning a new vision into reality is neither hopeless nor wrongly devised only because it is difficult and slow.” After all it took the Church more than 300 years to admit that they mistreated Galileo. Galileo was right. The challenge we face is that we have to learn to navigate the globally interdependent information society more creatively and skillfully and make it livable for us and future generations. This requires far superior communication skills and personal maturity than were required from us thus far. Outdated are such divisive habits as propping up *us* against *them* and polarizing *friends* against *enemies*. Yet, for many, it seems easier to preserve old in-group/out-group divisions and respond to humiliation with violent humiliation-for-humiliation in Hitler-like ways or by waging terror. It is not only easier; it also is an age-old tradition. Traditionally, societies were characterized by hierarchical structures, with strong-men [indeed, mostly men] often inflicting humiliating domination onto underlings and out-groups. All this has to be unlearned in today’s interdependent world, not least, as discussed earlier, because it is counterproductive and offers but a false sense of security.

Engaging in moderation, humility, and respect for equal dignity for all humankind is the deeply challenging new task. It requires the maturity of a Mandela. To make the challenge extra difficult, moderate peacemakers risk being affronted or even killed by those who live in the past. Extremist Hutus killed moderate Hutus, not only Tutsis, and peacemakers such as Gandhi, Anwar Sadat or Yitzhak Rabin were assassinated by their own extremists.

All this means that we face new tasks at all levels and they affect the world as a whole as much as our HumanDHS network and every single individual. Similar to society as a whole, also traditional organizations are often structured in a top-down fashion of “leaders” and “followers.” In our network, we wish to develop different dynamics. Typically, “followers,” when they detect “shortcomings” in their organization, expect leaders to rectify these shortcomings. They build up frustration and even aggression when this does not happen. Some create “factions” behind the back of the leaders of the group and some thrive on opposition to authority. Many a group of volunteers has been torn apart by such processes – particularly those members who wish to “change the world” and derive their motivation from anger risk venting this anger on their own leaders and colleagues.

In contrast, leadership in our group is not only selfless but also dispersed. Whoever takes up leadership positions in our network does not wish to confine our work through their personal limitations. We encourage all our members to formulate shortcomings not as shortcomings, but as challenges and reasons to step in and take over the tasks that are required to improve the situation. For example, I, as Founding Manager, let everybody know that I have personal limitations and do not wish to have these limitations restrict our work. I invite everybody who sees room for improvement to step in and take over the tasks that are necessary to bring about those improvements.

To recapitulate, we face global challenges, which, if we accept them as ours – and do not deny them or shy away from them – make us face a host of “sub-challenges.” We need to re-design organizational life at all levels, in business, in government, in civil society, in our families – and even our individual lives are affected. Among others, we face the challenge that we have to forge new definitions for what makes life meaningful and full and how we define “success of life.” Recently, friends told me about their neighbors and explained, “They have three children, a lawyer, a doctor, and a daughter, who has three children.” In other words, the success markers of sons were high-status professions, the success marker for a woman was to have children.

Let me link back to William Ury’s conceptualization of history. We know that early hunter-gathers enjoyed a superior health as compared to early farmers and realized a high degree of quality of life. They did neither accumulate children nor possessions. However, marriage ceremonies were important events and marriage and children might have been among the first markers of a meaningful and successful life. This quality orientation changed when land became the resource most people depended on. Hierarchical societies were built, with men as guardians and leaders and women as nurturers. Quantity began to reign. A man was successful when he had many children, many underlings, many wives, and many possessions.

What is a meaningful life for me, today? I am not married, I have no children, I have no secure salary, I have no traditional employment, I have no house and no possessions. My parents do not know how to explain their daughter’s life. Is she a failure? Where are her children or at least her Mercedes?

In short, what can I offer the world to show that my life is worth living? I must confess that I feel that this is a difficult challenge. Let me try: I see people, particularly in the rich parts of the world (but not only there) filling their lives with futilities – for example, with worrying about the color of their cars – while 12 million children are dying. Feeling overwhelmed by the world’s problems or closing one’s eyes to one’s responsibilities creates a sense of unhappiness, in some people more clearly, in others more vaguely. I do not feel this unhappiness. I feel deeply fulfilled and happy. Having a global family and trying to protect it gives me a deep sense of fulfillment.

The win-lose framing of the past millennia has furthermore taught people to guard their “territories” like watch-dogs. Many fill their lives with seeking advantages over others and hindering others to take advantage of them. They speak of nothing else but how they are good at showing others who the boss is. Life as a watch-dog, to me, is rather empty. It is isolating and alienating. The only way to connect to others is through boasting. In contrast, I enjoy connectivity and mutuality. I know that it is a challenge to leave behind old habits, however, to me the reward is so high that I do not regret my choices for a minute.

At last, the traditional division of labor between elites and underlings has handicapped both. In a traditional marriage, for example, the man decides, but does not change the diapers of his babies, while the woman maintains the harmony of the family, but does not define the larger frame. Neither of them uses their full potential. The man utilizes only his right sword arm so-to-speak, and the woman only the left arm of nurturing. In contrast, in today’s world, both can learn to use both arms – women can learn to lead and strategize and men to nurture. Even though this is another challenge, I enjoy the fullness that is entailed in learning both.

Many ask me whether I do not miss having “my things.” Living without possessions is too much of a challenge, they say. However, I do not miss having possessions (only sometimes, some). Possessions are largely an empty promise of happiness to me. To be sure, I am no communist who despises possessions or luxury; I love luxury because I love creativity that is expressed in beautiful and ingenious designs and objects. I love when technology is merged with beauty. And I am a collector. I could easily own ten houses around the world and fill them with beautiful and interesting objects. However, how much time would I be able to spend on each of my possessions in my lifetime? I have found that I do not need to collect things because they are already collected, by being on planet Earth, and I own everything. I feel infinitely rich.

To summarize the unique challenges of our times, there are global challenges which we need to take on, and when we do that, we face more challenges, namely the task of learning new cognitive maps and new skills. We need a new map of the world, no longer countries as first priority, but *One World*, and we need to learn new skills, namely how to navigate in a global knowledge society and maintain its cohesion. In short, we are required to redefine most aspects of our lives. It is a difficult challenge; however, the gain is worth it. Accepting global responsibility ultimately leads to more quality of life, both for the globe and for each individual who gets involved, me included.

How I, and also my family, sees/describes itself

Linda Hartling is the Associate Director of the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute (JBMTI) at the Stone Center, which is part of the Wellesley Centers for Women at Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts. She is also a Member of the Board of Directors of our network Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies. Linda and I, together with the other members of our network, frequently discuss how the *alternative community* that we attempt to build can be described and formed. We reject the former way of structuring collectivistic communities where elites are placed above underlings. We reject the other extreme as well, namely rugged individualism. We wish to preserve the relational aspects of collectivism and bring it together with the freedom of individualism.

We are aware that this is a difficult undertaking. Old-fashioned hierarchical communities require relatively few skills – obedience on the part of underlings and direction on the part of elites. A man in a traditional family usually leads his family, and they follow. Similarly, rugged individualism does not require complex social skills either. A prototypical Wallstreet financier is not interested in children and family life – except for a decorative attractive girl friend – and cherishes that he “can do what he wants.” No need for complex social skills; he buys everything.

In the *alternative community* that we envisage to build, we wish to give more weight to relationships and mutual connection than is the rule among rugged individualists, on one side, however, on the other side we also wish to give more weight than is usually permitted in collectivist societies to the freedom of each individual. This means that we need to develop a whole host of new social skills. How do we lead an organization of members whose equality in dignity we wish to respect? How do we maintain cohesion in such a group? We do not wish to engage in old-fashioned dominating authoritarian

behavior in our group. What do we do when it occurs? How do we humble arrogant people without humiliating them? How do we empower discouraged people without making them arrogant?

In December 2005, I wrote the following newsletter, subsequent to a meeting that our network had in New York (please read the entire newsletter at www.humiliationstudies.org/publications/newsletter06.php):

We believe that it is important for all of us to walk the talk. We wish to invite people into our group who are willing and able to promote our mission with humility and in a cooperative relational spirit of mutual support and respect. Competitive and adversarial behavioral styles that draw their strength from dominating and humiliating others have no room in our work. Please see our Index page, our Who We Are page (www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/whoweare.php), our Newsletter 1, 2, and 3 (www.humiliationstudies.org/publications/publications.php).

Related to “walking-the-talk” is the “glass-half-full” approach. We believe that lamenting only drains our energy – lamenting over whatever is “missing” and whatever we have not yet accomplished. Lamenting makes it more difficult to conceptualize what is missing as a challenge, as a next step, which we have to undertake with enthusiasm, motivation and courage in a joint effort.

The perspective of “appreciative inquiry” is therefore a useful frame of our work. Our HumanDHS efforts are not just about the work we do together, but also about HOW WE WORK TOGETHER. Please read An Appreciative Frame: Beginning a Dialogue on Human Dignity and Humiliation, that Linda has written for us in 2005 (www.humiliationstudies.org/publications/publications.php/documents/HartlingAppreciativeFrame.pdf).

Linda Hartling kindly added (September 21, 2005):

Although the “glass is half full” view is far more hopeful, I have some appreciation for the “glass half empty” view because, at times, this view is very practical. It can help us see difficult realities and keep our feet on the ground. The “glass half empty” perspective can bring to the forefront obstacles that could derail our efforts. Consequently, I am glad to have a few people who can bring “glass half empty” concerns to our attention, BUT they need to be people who can move beyond lamenting and help us take action. Perhaps “glass half empty” view is a problem when people get stuck in lamenting, rather than moving toward action???

I responded (September 22, 2005):

And I can't agree more with what you write, dearest Linda!
Yes, I believe it is the lamenting that is destructive – not the clear analysis of whatever risks or shortcomings there might be. Lamenting is like throwing the energy out of the window that one needs to address what one laments about. I have observed that networks and groups often have members who invest lots of energy in lamenting - without turning the observed shortcomings into a motivation to develop positive action: Lamenting as main occupation so-to-speak, as a way to bond with other “lamenters,”

as a way to build alternative “power-bases” in the network rather than action that benefits the whole group, as a way to live out unresolved problems with authority, or a way to maintain a victim-identity in the face of adversity.

I am searching for caring ways to invite “lamenters” into more constructive ways of applying their analysis. This topic links up to the themes of leadership, authority, and also the two theories of intelligence that we discussed as well (see newsletter 5 for an explanation). I believe that people with a mastery orientation also tend to have a constructive non-lamenting action orientation. To my observation, people with ego-oriented performance goals tend to cover up for shortcomings as long as they are their own, and engage in lamenting when shortcomings of others are at stake.

Then I discussed “old methods”:

May I repeat part of what I already addressed earlier, namely HOW we should promote our work. Please see our Mission Statement and Rationale for our Intervention Agenda (www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/mission.php, and www.humiliationstudies.org/intervention/interventionrationale.php) for a discussion of methods that networks like us, who wish to break new ground may apply.

Ray and Anderson (2000), coined the term “Cultural Creatives.” They explain that “the way it’s done by experts” might be counterproductive for promoting the goals of groups such as HumanDHS. Old methods do not work for new goals and values. People being addressed with slick advertising in direct mail may lose interest in the contents of such advertising. “The genuine connection, the sense of being recognized as a member of a shared community, is lost” (Ray and Anderson, 2000, p. 234).

We need to foster a genuine connection with our supporters, a sense of being recognized as a member of a shared community. We need to gain trust. Our website, our publications, and our meetings are all part of this process.

Linda Hartling kindly added (21st September 2005):

I particularly appreciated your observations related to gaining wider support: “We need to foster a genuine connection with our supporters, a sense of being recognized as a member of a shared community.” This so true. I don't think we want to gain support in conventional, fundraising ways; we want to create community.

Finally, I addressed the “need for wisdom”?

I personally am very aware of the shortness of life, every minute. I do not wish to live my life in pettiness. I am not happy if the only thing I am asked to think about is the “color of my car,” particularly not while millions of human beings do not even have a minimum of livelihood. I wish to live in Don’s broad and deep world of significance and meaning. Donald Klein moved us all deeply on Friday morning. He showed us how to live in awe and wonderment.

I wish to thank our three octogenarians for moving us all and bringing us together in caring generosity. We need your wisdom, dear Mort, David and Don! Your example is extremely encouraging. I personally draw my dedication for my work from thinking of

the courageous and insightful life-work of Morton Deutsch. And I remember David Hamburg sharing with me how he made Mikhail Gorbachev aware that only South Africa would survive in case of a nuclear exchange between the Soviet Union and the United States.

My definition of Family today

My family entails all humankind. Those I have learned to connect to more closely are the most intimate part of it. My love for my family gives my life meaning and fullness. This love entails many elements, from care to respect to recognition and mutual connection. I feel that we anchor each other on this planet, I anchor my family, and my family anchors me.

My global family needs help to live well. Many among the elites of the world move in the global village treating it as their village but in order to dominate it. The opposite is true for many of the less privileged people whom I met around the world: they might not have the means to travel the global village, however, *they do have a sense of one world*. Some elites wish to maintain globalization without egalization, while many among the less privileged want to marry both. And here lies my life project: I wish to help the latter's voices become louder so that the elites are forced to listen and I explain to the elites that they can but win by joining this effort. Creating a world of synergy as opposed to a world of domination/submission filled with fear, is beneficial to us all. And since I am no longer naive as to boundaries and "brick walls," I no longer invest time and energy into being astonished or indignant or hurt. Obstacles no longer make me lose my path. What gives me strength is my conviction that, after all, my message is a message of hope, even if more fearful souls do not dare to grasp this hope. It is profoundly hopeful to strengthen the trend that is entailed in globalization, namely the waning of in-group/out-group delineations. Thomas Friedman (2005) writes about the *flattening* tendency entailed in globalization. The core characteristics in globalization, namely the coming-into-being of *one single in-group* of *one single family of humankind* who takes care of their tiny planet, are profoundly constructive – if we manage to also make egalization work. We indeed have a chance to save Titanic-Earth. We have a chance to build a global family that deserves this name. This global family is my family.

Many in the movement for peace and environmental sustainability are angry people, angry at the rest of the world who is short-sighted and does not understand that safeguarding the common good is serving everybody, including them, and is preferable to petty squabbling. "American interest," for example, cannot be divorced from the rest of the world and is best served by safeguarding common global interest.

In their anger, many in the movement for sustainability, both socially and ecologically, are equally short-sighted when they engage in what I call "indignation entrepreneurship." They try to "prove" to their less enlightened fellow human beings, particularly their leaders, how "stupid" they are.

To my experience, this strategy is counterproductive. People usually do not improve their behavior upon being shown how stupid they are. The only gain is that peace activists themselves feel cozily united by their indignation against the rest – like adolescents rallying together to oppose their unsuitable parents. This is a strategy of

immaturity. The gains flowing of uniting against a common enemy is often destroyed, furthermore, by the very indignation. Instead of reforming the world, not seldom, indignation and anger merely turn inwards and tear apart the peace and ecology movement itself.

I suggest sidelining the short-sighted power-hungry perpetrators of our world and recommend bypassing destructive practices (which often are perpetrated by “normal people”). I propose that we focus on building a constructive positive movement that strengthens constructive approaches and sends present perpetrators from power into irrelevance (from where it is a short way to the International Criminal Court), and that we prevent the emergence of potential future perpetrators.

I admire Nelson Mandela, who channeled the energy entailed in rage into constructive social change. He could have unleashed genocide on the white elite in South Africa. He did not. I propose to follow his strategy. Let us take the energy entailed in rage and transform it constructively.

I call upon every citizen of our world, including all angry and cynical people around the world, to let go of the satisfaction that flows from indulging in indignation and lamentation and in discouraging other people. A world in crisis needs every hand to help saving it. It might not be possible to save it. However, if we wring our hands in lamentation, we guarantee our world’s demise and foreclose the tiny chance that we might have if we jointly throw all our energy in constructively.

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