

in
a
time
not
so
far
away



in

a

time

not

so

far

away



In a time not so far away, a time perhaps parallel to the one we are in now, a new way is coming into being. The next time you blink, stay there. Keep your eyes closed for just a few more seconds and you will see it. The future, coming into being. The future, now.





It isn't an immediate change. There is no violent revolution or extended guerilla warfare. In fact, it is at the outset, mundane as far as these things go. The old way just becomes less and less sustainable, more and more absurd. People get hungrier, the gap between the poor and the rich greater. Citizens become tired, fatigued by lives of struggle and work, further and further away from wellness. Further and further away from nature. From dirt and water and trees and care and peace and being. Further and further away from life.

And the more disconnected they become, the deeper their longing, the more their need, the greater their desire for change. Somehow amidst the chaos, a world in pain, a population under duress, there is, what could be described as an opening of the senses. People begin to hear sounds they have never heard, smell scents they have never smelled. They see sights that had always been right in front of them seemingly for the first time. Everything is heightened and from this place, in this time, the possibilities for change are as expansive as the universe herself.





Come
sit
with
us
as
we
tell
you
a
story,
a
glimpse
at
a
people
in
change.





When the country is coming into change, the people begin to remember a long-ago story that the elders used to tell, a long-ago way of being.

In the beginning, there was water and sky. There was air and there was soil. The soil was alive. Mystery surrounds the time of the first people, but it is known that they gathered at every five settings of the sun under the oldest tree in the land, the one with the widest reaching roots and biggest branches. They gathered with the animals and amongst the plants. They spoke of what they took and what they gave; what they felt and what they made. They took only what they needed and they presented offerings of reciprocity to the land that cared for them. When the first people greeted each other, they asked, “Is your heart at ease?” and the response was always, “Only if your heart is at ease.” Their fidelity was to each other, their wellness co-dependent. The people of the sun and the moon, the water and the land. They knew the secret language of trees, they understood the work of bees, they swam with sea turtles and had conversations with frogs. They sang love songs to plants before the harvest and they danced around trees before picking fruits. They studied ants and learned from the communal workings of plants. They lived with the earth and abided by its universal law – **all harvest is mutual.**

The people remember this long-ago story and they begin to desire a different way of being.





It was easier in the time of the first people. Life was simple. All transactions were balanced exchanges and all exchanges were local. People knew the origins of their food. They thanked the land as they harvested the crops. All care was intimate and all care was valued. Gratitude was shown in recognition and reciprocity. You knew everybody you needed to know because everybody in your life was everybody.

The world has become much more complicated in the years since. It is larger, more connected in consequence, more disconnected in practice. How do you make change when decisions are not your own? When you can't discuss under the oldest tree in the land, when relationships aren't between the land and the people you know, but between systems and actors far removed from you? When scarcity has taken the place of abundance and extraction has taken the place of the intimacy of the connectedness of the living world?

In this place, how do they make change? They start with desire that leads to demands.





But first, we should mention the obvious that is sometimes not so obvious. There is no clean start. The earth is too old for new, people have been around too long for smooth beginnings.

The old way fed greed and made way for cruelties. To create their world different, the people first recognize past hurts and wrongdoings. They recognize suffering, those intimately theirs and those previously believed to be removed from their own. They voice their pain and they ask each other and the land for forgiveness.

There is no one event, but a foundational reckoning, an ongoing process, personal and public. And with every coming mistake, any hurt, they continue to speak and to ask for forgiveness.





The people ask, “Where should we begin?” and they answer, “We demand an end to violence against women. We demand repercussions against those who violate women. We demand to be paid for our work, in our homes and outside of our homes. We want all work to be paid work. Honest work to be respected work. The teachers, doctors, shoe shiners, farmers, sex workers, scientists, shop workers, cooks, administrators, nurses, market sellers, government workers, all of them to be respected and paid. Where should we begin? We want all workers to be restful, to have time to play. We demand leisure as a right. Where should we begin? We need hospitals. We demand it as a right. We need the hospitals to be equipped and doctors to be responsible, we need doctors to care. Where should we begin? We need schools. We demand it as a right. We need schools to be equipped and teachers to be responsible, we need teachers to care. We need our leaders to care. Where should we begin? We need our leaders to be with us. To be treated in the same facilities as us, for them to be for us. Where should we begin? We demand shelter, a place to lay down our heads. Where should we begin? We need peace, relief from fear, release of fear. Where should we begin? We demand water and electricity. Water and electricity! Please. Where should we begin? We want art. We want to be free to create. We demand the right to imagine. Where should we begin? We want roads and infrastructure to work for our needs. We want our roads to be safe and to take us where we want to go. We want to be connected. Where should we begin? We want our food to be affordable and safe. We want it to nourish. We want the right to choose our food. The right to choose how and where it is produced. The onions, garlic, tomatoes, peppers, yams, okra, cassava, coffee, plantains, mangoes, bananas, oranges, all that, all that, we want to be able to eat with ease. We need reprieve. Where should we begin?”





Where do they begin? It is the work of everyday people. It is the artist's visions, the market women protests, the sex workers imaginings, the mothers fatigue and innovation, the domestic worker's desires, the children's curiosity, the farmer's wisdom, the researchers evidence, the community's giving, the people's labor. **It is everything all at once.**





When desires change, the language follows suit. The language changes to reflect a new vibration, a value system of wellbeing and sustainable co-dependence, of obligation and responsibility to the living. In this place, the language of politics sounds like...





“Are you well?”

“Are you healthy?”

“Are you cared for?”

“Are you restful?”

“Are you paid a dignified wage?”

“Do you have shelter?”

“Is your community safe?”

“Do you have access to water and electricity?”

“Are your hospitals equipped?”

“How far do you have to travel to see a doctor?”

“Do you have access to education?”

“What kind of education do you have access to?”

“What is the price of onions?”

“How is food produced?”

“What can I do to be of service?”

“Have we been of service?”

“Is it fair?”

“Is it just?”

“Is it kind?”





It doesn't take long to realize that the language of politics is only as effective as its proximity to the receiver. In the time of the first people, everything was local. When decisions were made concerning the community, it was the community making the decisions. They did so based on what they could feel and see and touch. What they knew to be right and balanced and fair and kind.

In this place and in this time, the people decide that polices be created in the context of every neighborhood. The government is local, regional and central. The government is in the residence of the people because the government is the people. When government officials ask the people, "Is it fair? Is it just? Is it kind?" very many times, they are asking their neighbors.





When the first people used to ask, “Is your heart at ease?” and respond, “Only if your heart is at ease,” they were suggesting that the wellbeing of one is tied to the wellbeing of the other. They were suggesting a system of reciprocity, connection, obligation and responsibility. They were also suggesting a system of care.

The people in this place decide early on that they need to remind themselves of their responsibility to one another, so they create the oath of care. They do so as a promise to the living. All the people of the land, hand over their hearts, recite:

*Like beauty is to life
And life to beauty
Like soil is to plants
And plants to soil
Like kisses are to lovers
And lovers to kisses
You are to me
And I to you
We, the people
The laborers of love.*





With the demand for all work to be compensated work, the laborers of love start talking about women's unpaid care work. They talk about the time and energy and labor that it takes women to raise children, care for the sick, cook, clean, fetch water. The time and energy and labor that previously had not been recognized and compensated by society. The time and energy and labor that supported economies and ensured that societies function, however poorly.

They start talking about women's unpaid care work and they begin to imagine a shift towards care; they imagine care prioritized, respected and compensated. Care had an inherent currency in the time of the first people and now the people begin to believe that the same can be true in this time. And like anything of value, they demand that care be compensated in the currencies recognized by society. It is a wild imagining and the most basic of demands.





The right to care means the system of governance provides:

Compensation for care of the land

+

Compensation for care of children, the elderly, people with disabilities and all those in need

+

Training for caregivers

+

Regulations for care

=

A society centered on care for the living

+

Better and more quality care services

+

Paid work

+

Safe work

+

Economic expansiveness

+

Happier, safer, healthier, more fulfilled people





In this place, care is a story also told in numbers. When the people create their budgets, they ask questions like, how can numbers look like liberation? How can percentages be kind? So many stories can be told in how a country spends its money.

They look for examples of national budgets that work for the people, but can't find anything comprehensive enough to model after. So they work, they research, they have conversations with people who know, they ask questions, they gather information, they talk and debate, and slowly they begin to allocate for life.

Go deep and you will find that the new numbers talk about universal public services that work for the people, dignified wages and safety nets that protect all the people doing all the work, regulated and just trade that serves the people, and agricultural diversity that nourishes the people and the land. Go deep deep and you will find artists renderings, poetry in numbers, a love song, a most beautiful thing.





GDP
is
no
longer
a
thing.

Here, they measure happiness, wellness, leisure, love, safety, shelter, education, freedom, beauty. They measure the health of the people, the soil, the waters, and the air. They measure life. All of these are signs of wealth, indicators of an economy of abundance for all the people.

Here, all the gains are shared and all of the people are cared for. Here, it is clear that there is enough for the living to live.

**In
this
place
the
harvest
must
always
be
mutual.**





This is a time created on radical imaginings, unbounded visions and freed up desire. Liberated dreams are fertile ground for the work of artists. The place itself is a work of creation, a work of art. The flourishing of imaginations means aesthetics has value and beauty is currency. In this place, art is a necessity and as such is supported in the currencies recognized by society.

The poets, musicians, painters, photographers, writers, woodworkers, metal workers, sculptors, filmmakers, architects, mud builders, dancers, actors, comedians, quilters, sewers... they all create the world and tell the story of change.





♪ It's gonna be alright, alright. It's gonna be
alright, alright.
He loves me all night, all night. He loves me all
night, all night.
We walk upright, upright. We all walk upright,
upright. ♪

“Bring in the drums strong at this part.”

♪ Honey dripping dreams
We eat together
Staying cool in the breeze
Climbing in the trees
We play together
Staying cool in the breeze
Honey dripping dreams
Dripping dreams
Feeling ease. ♪

“Now the flute. Let's give the people love with
the flute. Do that thing you did before.”





There is a women's collective that has organized a protest. There are over 500 women in the streets with slogans saying, "raise your hands against one and you are raising your hands against us all." The women who organize the protest hand out a report on their work, "imagine this," they call it. Teachings around healthy relationships between men and women, around conflict resolution, peaceful communication and power balance. Six months prior, this same collective along with others throughout the country, organized street theatre performances called, "like the moon cycle," about a group of teenage girls who realize that their cycles are that of the moon. That their blood is life giving, a time for rest and renewal. Women and girls gathered after these performances and had conversations about their bodies and their power and their needs. The profane became sacred and policy changes followed suit, including a competition program in schools for students to develop sanitary pads using only local materials. At the end of the program, the top two were chosen as the new government funded, locally produced sanitary pads, distributed free of charge.

Now, some of these same women are in the streets saying that the government isn't doing enough to protect women from violence. And though the vision is clear, though the intentions are aligned, though the government is the people, change is a struggle and service work is very rarely easy in the going. It is the role of the people to remind the government of their obligations and to show them the way. It is the responsibility of government to stay open to the calls of the people.

It takes 14 days of protests, and thousands more women, men and children in the streets for officials to come to a consensus, to meet with their people and discuss how they can be of service.





We haven't mentioned yet that a pandemic precedes the early days of change. A global catastrophe that reveals the consequences of a marketplace model of healthcare. But even in the midst of death without borders, those with global power discuss intellectual property, who should receive the vaccine, when and at what cost. The movement for a people's vaccine quickly turns into a desire and demand to build local capacity to create medicine, to produce clean food, to keep the soil healthy, to remember the medicinal power of nature and to center care.

“Why do we have to wait for them to give us medicine? Why do we have to beg for their recipe? Why do we have to explain to them that we can replicate what they have done? Even if it takes us decades, we have to resource for our health. Remember what the Cubans told us?”

Every time you enter their room, you're at the end of a barrel of a gun, begging for your life. Every time, you come out wounded.





Change is as reliable an occurrence as the rising sun. It is as breath is to life. Still, even the best of us resist change when it comes. Here, the resistance is more dangerous than most. The change is against a global economic system. The change challenges the pockets of the powerful and because of that, there is sure to be reprisal. The people know what is coming because they know the history of any place that has tried to do the same. Here is a conversation amongst government officials as they prepare for the coming of the days.

“The technical assassins are requesting a meeting again.”

“You keep using Sankara’s language and we might end up like he did.”

“He was too visible. He was alone. We are not the only ones who are calling for defaulting on the debt. It is the people and sister nations who are making this happen.”

“Speaking about the people, who from the civil society side will be at the meeting?”

“Zemaliya. She’ll lead the talks for the larger collective.”

“And the other countries?”

“The same six are with us. The group is still trying to expand the circle. The three holdouts look like they may come our way, but the threats are intensifying.”

“What are they saying?”

“The same thing they always say. ‘You know, if a person doesn’t pay their house rent, they are out on the streets. We want you to be successful. We want peace for your country. But, a decision like this will not be good for you or your country.’”

“It’s like they’re reading from a prompt.”

“Let’s have another call with Bolivia before the meeting. See what we’re up against.”





The assassins are people too
In our story, they are the villains
It is true
But the adversary is a person too

Yes it is true
It is true
The assassins are people too
And it is possible always
That the enemy becomes you





There are so many stories of broken hope and unfulfilled dreams, of tragedy and what ifs. The perceived heroes becoming villains, the real ones becoming martyrs, the ideas and the hope becoming notes in history. Even the temporary sparks of light were once in a generation miracles. Bright, shiny, sometimes solitary things.

But this is a time that envisions everyday miracles like grass that grows through concrete, or rain on a summer day, or rivers of hot steam, or honey from bees. The people want the vision to be as mundane as breathing, for the spectacular to be the norm. So, they work in solidarity, to be one among many.





The dream is greater than any border. The promise is larger than any notion of nation. The responsibility transcends the confines of any government structure. In this place, solidarity is a strategy for survival; it is fidelity to the vision. So, when the assassins set their sights on a sister nation, the officials respond to the call to see how they can be of service.

“Sister, I hear they’re coming after you strong.”

“It is no surprise.”

“What did they say?”

“They presented a research report. They said, ‘you know we are not asking for money. We are suggesting that you can pay the debt by bringing in private companies to help you grow your electricity infrastructure.’ Then they showed us projections from their research of how the economy would grow and people’s lives would be improved through privatization.”

“What did you say?”

“I told them privatization didn’t work for healthcare in our country. Why would it work in this instance? And they said it is working; it just needs time.”

“They’re going to come after you.”

“I know. I told them to give me time. I didn’t want to give them an answer. I’m waiting to hear back from the organizations working on educating the population throughout the country. We need the people behind us for this.”

“It’s easier for us because we don’t have oil.”

“You should thank God for that. We need to bring in clean money. We’re trying to change the trade policies and our tax system, but that’s when they’ll really come after us.”

“One step at a time. Let us know how we can be of service.”

“Always. Let us know the same”





It is as hard a struggle as any, to keep the soil clean. Although the green revolution resulted in the offerings of rotten fruits and damaged soil, diseased seeds and defective policies, it is a struggle still to shift. The pressure, the blackmail, and the threats are similar, if not the same, when it comes to opposing GMOs as when defaulting on the debt.

But because the people have to eat and because food is medicine, because the soil needs nutrients, because the land is fertile and because the rules are changed, organic small-scale agriculture becomes the hope and budget expenditures act accordingly. The farmers unions make certain of that.

And every month, the people in government put their hands in the dirt to remember the ways of creation.





The way we are telling this story, it sounds as if all this country does is spend money. The natural question would be – how does the money come in? It turns out that when care workers are paid, when people are taken care of, when the soil is healthy, when the air and the waters are clean, when the harvest increases, when the debt is history, when decisions are sovereign, when artists can create, and when communities are safe – a country can witness a flourishing and the harvest can be mutual.





So, this is the twist. Nothing that exists in this time is new. Nothing ever is.

The story of the first people isn't the only inspired memory. There have been so many cycles of goodness, so many lit up skies. You know the story of post-independence African nations don't you? The dreams of a thriving agricultural sector, the regulation of the private sector, diversified economies, universal education, healthcare as a right.

You remember that story of freedom don't you? Before structural adjustment modified our visions and imprisoned our will. You remember that time that ceased to be, seemingly just as it began, don't you?

Memories of the past help guide the way.





Building a new world doesn't happen without conflict. Chaos is likely, and the funders of chaos are more numerous now than the former colonial powers. The former colonial powers who never gave up power. The architects of a global economic system built on inequality, a system at odds with life.

Every bit of change, every decision towards freedom, is met by a strategy of destruction. Technical assassins at work. Armed groups form. Internal conflict arises. Wealthy oppositions emerge. Indicators of discontent, evidence of deceit. A story as old as time.

The vision is as strong as the will of the people, the work of the people, the work for the people. The country is as strong as its commitment to life. To creation. To beauty. To care. To love. A commitment to the belief that the people, all the people, will either flourish or perish together.

The people hold on because now, the only way that they remember how to live is free.





As real as any dream has ever been,
what we've said here is true.

**In a time not so far away
Life is queen
This above all
Is the dream.**







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