

The new 'normal' as the start of the 'great turning' for transformative justice, social change, equity, and sustainable communities.

"Let yourself be silently drawn by the stronger pull of what you really love."
~ Rumi

When I agreed to write a post with an international theme for the Vanguard issue, I had no idea that it would be in the middle of the COVID-19 global pandemic – a virus attack which, in one way or another, is uniting us as a Global Community. Dealing with it asks us all for innovative thinking, ideas and approaches on the meaning and purpose of Community Development Practice (CDP), and on our roles and responsibilities as Community Development Practitioners (CDPs).

COVID-19 is challenging all of us in our commitment to each and every one of the principles for which we stand, both as practitioners and as members of a family, community, society and nation. Each one of us now in our social isolation has had, however reluctantly, to realize our vulnerability – not just as a citizen, family, and community member, but also as a species. Many of us were at first positively hopeful that this pandemic would soon pass, and that everything would go back to normal again. Now we are realizing that it is not passing quickly, and that it is increasingly likely that nothing will ever be quite the same again. The new 'normal' will differ from the 'normal' we thought we knew.

Global pandemics such as COVID-19 re-emphasize the importance of CDPs, the need for our profession, and the role that we play in ensuring community well-being. Going forward in the aftermath of COVID-19, with resources diminished from fighting it, we will need to be more vigilant and innovative in rebuilding communities. We will be working from a micro level of well-being for our families, friends, and neighbors, through our communities, to the macro level well-being of our state sustainability. Although pandemics threaten our very existence, they also provide us with opportunities to 'reset and turn' our current way of life into a better one. It is at this turning point that CDPs are needed more than ever before. We will be called upon to guide communities in innovative ways towards rebuilding new sustainable, equitable and inclusive communities in our global society.

This rebuilding of community and society will require CDPs to revisit the works of scholar-activists such as David Korten, Johanna Macy, and Grace Lee Boggs. As early as the 2000s they put forward a much needed 'great turning'. This 'turning' would shift us from our current times of being an economic growth 'extractivist society' to a society that is in balance and self-sustaining in every dimension of well-being: socio-cultural, physical, infrastructural, environmental, political, and economical. These scholarly foresights, more than fifteen years ago, emanated from the term '*earth community*' described in the International Earth Charter of 2000. This charter consists of sixteen principles, clustered in four interrelated pillars derived from an ethical vision that proposes peace, environmental protection, human rights, and equitable human development.

One of the founding pieces of 'turning' literature is "*The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*" by David Korten (2006). The unequal distribution of power and social benefits that goes back as far as 5 000 years is highlighted. The development of empires, political and social, continues to this day. Korten (2006) warns us of being "on the verge of a perfect storm of converging crises", and that to avoid it will require major changes to our current economic and social structures.

Who would have thought that COVID-19 could so quickly ‘trigger’ this realization? Who could have anticipated that we as CDPs would be given the opportunity to work with communities to start the ‘great turning’ (transformation) from an ‘industrial growth society’ to a ‘self-sustaining civilization’?

Every one of us has been presented with an opportunity to relook at, and rework, our CDP approach towards making a difference and contributing towards a better life for society. Many resources and scholarly works are available to assist us with re-imaging our ‘new’ future of ‘turning’ towards achieving an Earth Community of well-being. Perhaps a good place to start will be with the founding authors of the ‘turning’: David Korten, Johanna Macy, and Grace Lee Boggs. They led the way to many more publications by other proponents of transformative justice, social change, equity and self-sustaining communities in a harmony of societies.

How are we going to take up this unforeseen opportunity to do things differently in the new ‘normal’ of CDP tomorrow?

Below are some useful links to material by the founding authors mentioned in this blog:

<https://davidkorten.org/library/>;

<https://www.joannamacy.net/main#books>;

https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5323/fire.2.1.0060#metadata_info_tab_contents