The Revolution Requires New Assumptions

by Dave Ewoldt

<http://readersupportednews.org/pm-section/78-78/35408-the-revolution-requires-new-assumptions>

I'd like to add to Michelle Alexander's excellent post <<http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/277-75/35292-focus-if-a-political-revolution-is-born-it-will-have-little-to-do-with-bernie-or-hillary-but-everything-to-do-with-us>> that it's not just politics that must change, but the assumptions of our politics. This holds for all the other revolutions in our way of being that need to take place--the social, economic, energy, environmental, and moral revolutions. The foundational assumptions of the dominant paradigm can not be applied. That's what got us into this mess.

The reason I'd like to belabor this point is to raise awareness that there is a way we can pull this off, that we can make systemic changes, that there are tools at our disposal, and that life itself is on our side.

We are not separate from the natural world. Hierarchies of domination are not the way life organizes. Difference does not automatically infer superiority or inferiority. The pathological sense of the other which emerges from thinking otherwise is what's behind the exploitation, inequity, and injustice running rampant today; that manifest in free-market ideology and rugged individualism; where greed, aggression and shallow status symbols are idolized and fetishized.

Infinite growth is unsustainable. Earth cannot simultaneously be an endless supply of resources and a bottomless pit for wastes. We cannot both increase the slices of pie and make each of those slices bigger. Let's just be honest and admit that's magical thinking. But our industrial model of the world requires it. So the industrial paradigm of disconnection, domination, and an inferior other must be replaced.

It's not just that Industrialism has both peaked (the cheap energy source needed for growth is no longer cheap or abundant) and become a dead end (our life support system is being destroyed). Neither of the major economic systems that support Industrialism--socialism and capitalism--are going to be any help in the long run, and we must also admit the way of thinking that had us believing it was even a good idea in the first place is at its very core erroneous.

The good news is that there is a framework that can be applied and built on. We can shift to a new paradigm built on integrity, justice and democracy; that develops its core strength from diversity. There are ways we can non-hierarchically organize, communicate, and share leadership. There are ways we can reconnect and develop healthy relationships congruent with the core principles of life and build the critical mass--the multi-issue coalitions--needed to affect systemic, life-affirming change.

As you may have already guessed, healthy ecosystems supply this model--self-organizing networks of mutual support that sustain the whole. Natural systems principles have been working rather well for billions of years on this planet. As a species we actually used to live in partnership with each other and the rest of the natural world (and some cultures still try their best to do so), so it's not something we have to discover or learn as much as remember and adhere to.

When you walk these concepts out to their logical conclusion, what you find is the shared desire for a sustainable future. The movements for ecological integrity, social justice, economic equity, and participatory democracy are all calling for this shared future, even if not using the exact same terminology. Acknowledging and embracing the vibrancy, resiliency and strength that emerges from diversity is the most direct way to address and overcome racism, sexism, and classism. Since there will be no economy on a dead planet, the axiom of this meta-movement is that there can be no justice without sustainability, and without justice there will never be peace.

While Bernie Sanders may not be taking the analysis to this depth (or he's being smart enough not to admit it, which is probably what's got the 1% worried the most), the practical first steps of the needed changes are integral to his campaign platform. In order to deal realistically with global warming, we must get money out of politics and corporations out of our government. We must mitigate the harmful effects of an economy which thrives on hierarchies and greed. We must stop trying to bomb others into submission if they don't agree with the tenets of neo-liberalism and global corporatization.

We are perfectly capable and within our rights to institute a living wage, establish education and health care as a right, and tax the wealth that accrues from benefiting from what society provides in order to support the vibrancy and resiliency of society. We can hold technology to its long-withheld promise of increased leisure time. Corporations are a legal fiction; they are a tool of society, not the other way around. We can direct our existing social institutions to implement these fundamental changes and dismantle roadblocks to change.

None of this is unrealistic. It's all being done around the world on various scales. What's been missing is a cohesive framework to hold it all together and increase our degree of certainty for achieving success. A framework based on natural systems principles supplies the support for all of our individual progressive efforts and is something we can quite naturally press into service today.