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Don't Sit This One Out

Anything else you're interested in is not going to happen if you can't breathe the air and drink the water. Don't sit this one out. Do something. You are by accident of fate alive at an absolutely critical moment in the history of our planet.

— Carl Sagan

And now, my friends, this is your moment.

By whatever comparisons you choose, we are living through the most astonishing period in humanity's evolution on this Earth. The Universe from which we evolved created itself 13.5 billion years ago. The Earth was formed 4.5 billion years ago. The first living cells emerged 3.5 billion years ago. Our modern ancestors left Africa 100,000 years ago. We embarked on the Industrial Revolution 250 years ago.

Within the last 100 years, we have waged the most destructive and painful wars the world has ever seen. We have rid the world of most dictatorships and tyrannies. We have removed many of the barriers that prevented women from participating in the affairs of the world. We have launched ourselves into space and looked back on our planet for the first time. We are moving beyond narrow nationalism and tribalism to create a truly global society. We have created the first global communications systems, forming a global brain.

During these past 100 years we have tripled our human population; multiplied our use of the Earth's resources twenty-fold; and poured a vast burden of pollution into Earth's oceans, soils and air, and into our own bodies. We have eliminated more species than at any other period of evolution.

By burning fossil fuels and destroying Earth rainforests and grasslands, we have put ourselves on a path that will lead to the collapse of Earth's ecosystems and human civilization. A rapid course adjustment is needed before it is too late.

We have done these things before, however. As humans, we are *good* at change, especially if we allow the world's youth to play their part. Maybe the problem with democracy is that too many old people vote and not enough young people.

As a planet, these are like our teenage years - we have a great sense of power, but not the wisdom to accompany it. Can we build a sustainable future? That is the great unknown. If we succeed, an incredible future awaits us. If we fail, it may be curtains for this particular planet. All of the sacrifices made by our ancestors, whether on the beaches of Normandy, in the struggle to abolish slavery, or through a million other heroic achievements, will have been in vain. Will we succeed? That is up to you, me, and all of us.

Within every human, a hero awaits. If you are a dancer, dance your concern. If you are a teacher, teach it. If you are just an ordinary person, join up with other ordinary people and change the world.

I have done my best to lay the solutions before you. At this point, I stand aside. The stage is yours.

- Joanna Macy: joannamacy.net
- The Great Turning: thegreatturning.net
- YES! Magazine: yesmagazine.org
- Positive News: PositiveNews.org.uk



Driven by the forces of love, the fragments of the world seek each other, so that the world may come into being.

— Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955)

Our task must be to widen our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

— Albert Einstein (1879–1955)

If the world is to be healed through human efforts, I am convinced it will be by ordinary people, whose love for this life is even greater than their fear.

— Joanna Macy (1929–)