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JIM NATICHIONI, PATH GUIDE



I am Jim Natichioni of RightLivelihood.com and I have written the inspirational book: **Finding Your Path, Tales of Right Livelihood**. This excerpt is from Chapter Eighteen: “Working on the Fringes of the System” and relates to following your passion to make a difference. To read more please visit RightLivelihood.com.

**Finding your path and right livelihood:** The theme of how we choose to interact with the system continues. Except now there is more at stake, the fate of our environment and our future. How a couple hundred hippies, a couple with deep faith, smart growth advocates, a Wisconsin Indian tribe, a man with a slide show and a growing green workforce have conspired against the conspirators to make progress in the struggle for economic and ecological sustainability. The successful people in this chapter follow an intentional path; it is my hope that these stories about commonality of interests and intent will guide you.

You have read a lot about ‘the system’ in this book, and those who work within it and outside it: As examples; Mahatma Gandhi, Paul Watson, John Robbins, The Nearing, Black Elk and Lao-tzu all intentionally chose a path which was outside the boundaries of the established system. Lech Walessa, Coach Wheeler, Burt of Burts Bees, Eleanor Roosevelt, Darby McQuade, and Leonardo DaVinci chose to make their mark within the framework of the system. Paul Hawken, Annie Besant, Rachel Carson and Henry David Thoreau worked it both ways, what I like to call ‘on the fringes’.

This chapter is about the good, the bad, and the ugly sides of the system and how some have exploited it, some have challenged it and some have existed on the fringes. Whether we choose to accept it or not, we are all part of this system; as such we can help influence the course of events within it. The stories in this final chapter will take you from one end of the ‘green’ spectrum to the other. Some are part of the problem blatantly or through apathy, others have become part of the varied solutions; as always it is up to the individual which path to choose. We have focused on exceptional people who have chosen to live with intent, or intentionally.

## **Restoring the economic system so it works for us and the environment:**

One day I heard the Lone Ranger had died. His creed read in part “Sooner or later, somewhere, somehow we must settle with the world and make payment for what we have taken. Yes, I thought; that’s it. I have been a taker and now it is time to give back, to people, but especially to our earth. It is time to complete the circle.

In the book, The Way of the Circle by James R. Vollbracht, the old ferryman tells the boastful and rich merchant that true riches are found in gifts given from the heart; if the circle is filled with kindness that is what will one day return, if is filled with greed for money that is what will return. On his next ferry across the great river he encounters a Prince who tells the old man he has no reason to live because his life has no joy or

meaning or purpose. The wise old man advises: “My prince, you have been given everything. By giving nothing back, you are suffering from a sickness of the heart. You are not following the circle of life... It takes courage to give of yourself, my prince, but when you do, you will find reason for living.”

### **The recent proliferation of green businesses:**

**Green Business:** Al Gore, Jr., Carl Pope of the Sierra Club, Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute and countless other leaders of the environmental movement stress that we are in the process of draining the life-energy out of the earth just as we drain it from ourselves. If we breathe lousy air, drink tainted water, eat poisoned food, think negative thoughts and live meaningless lives we will get sick and die young. If we steal our stored energy, pollute our earth, bomb each other, kill off species and consume all of our natural resources, the earth will get sick and die young. You receive as you have given, no more, no less. When enough people raise their consciousness through ‘right livelihood’ civilization becomes a self-sustaining entity.

As mentioned in the introduction and it bears repeating there is hope on the horizon. Today there are many opportunities to follow a path that holds purpose and relevancy. With the healthy growth of an increasingly sustainable economy and the treasure-trove of compassionate individuals and groups the climate is ripe for the proliferation of ‘right livelihood’. Visionary baby boomers and young people alike are setting the trend for a sustainable economy founded on a socially responsible workplace.

It is hard for us old skeptics to believe that there exists a new generation of corporate green entrepreneurs who believe that making money and doing good are inextricably linked. The emerging ‘stakeholder theory’ holds companies responsible to employees, social activists, customers and the local and global communities as well as their shareholders. Can business finally become a force for social change, will we soon see ‘Corporate Responsibility Reports’ along side “Annual Reports’ and environmental responsibility as part of every organizations mission?

**Green jobs:** One reason a shift in corporate consciousness is occurring is because of people like you who are taking concepts such as ‘right livelihood’ seriously. The Bentley Leadership Forum suggests that new hires are asking questions about opportunities to make social contributions through their jobs and with the stiff competition to attract the most progressive workers corporations are finding it necessary to pay more than lip service to their requests. With the influx of a social and environmental ethic into the corporate world will come a proliferation of green jobs to audit energy efficiency, track carbon deficits and reduce waste, to name a few.

Our world is changing in many ways. The global warming crisis has not only sent shock waves to the ears of small green businesses but to big business as well. The 2006 corporate social responsibility press release claims that more than 70 % of the worlds largest 500 companies are now addressing climate change and 90 % of them have “flagged climate change as posing commercial risks and/or opportunities to their business.” Companies that used to ‘greenwash’ or pay lip service to embracing cleaner more efficient policies are jumping on the bandwagon. For instance the top green story of the year (2006) is the greening of Wal-Mart and the top company of the decade as far as reduction of their energy consumption and environmental impact was Dupont followed closely by International Paper.

The reason for this proliferation is that regular people like you and I have followed some excellent leaders and now tread a path of stewardship. Al Gore's slide show crusade, multiple green business.coms, sustainable magazines, the Rocky Mountain Institute (for restorative resource research), the Co-Op America Green Pages and the Rodale Press are but a few of the hundreds of sources that get the word out loud and clear to an increasingly receptive audience. Although we have lagged behind other nations the spirit of America is great, and I would not be surprised if one day we become leaders in global responsibility.

### **The grass roots campaign that helped turn the tide:**

In the wake of his sour defeat at the polls Al Gore decided to take a break from politics and dabbled in some senior management positions. Most of his energy however was spent following a modest path he was really passionate about, what he calls, 'the climate crisis.' He gathered research about the environment and green house gasses and global warming and methodically started putting together data and graphs and pictures in a slide show presentation. He did not look to head an environmental organization or run a lobbying campaign.

What he did was the simplest of things, what grass roots activism is all about, what our system when it works accordingly is all about, he brought his cause to the people. The slide show was lambasted as being reactionary and inaccurate but sometimes the truth is so strong even master propagandists can't subdue it. Within a few years the Academy Award winning documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth," was being shown by a slew of trained instructors all over the world and the consumers and the public and the world is listening.

In a Time magazine article writer Eric Pooley tells the story of Al Gores emergence from devastated loser of the 2000 presidential election to the country's foremost spokesperson for the environment and as the person many wish would carry the torch back into politics to lead the country. About both crisis' (environmental and political) Gore often quotes Churchill's (reference to fascism) warning that "the era of procrastination" is giving way to "a period of consequences." Pooley calls Gore the leader who does everything in his power to "sound the alarm about the climate crisis, and that decision helped... trigger one of the most dramatic opinion shifts in history as Americans suddenly realized they must change the way they live." In a 2007 New York Times/CBS news pole 60% to 90% of Americans across the board said they favor "immediate action" to confront the crisis.

Gore says about his past political trials and tribulations, "what doesn't kill me makes me stronger." Now-a-days "he is not selling himself he is selling a cause, a journey." "The slide show is a journey," he quips, implying that the show, like his own life, has experienced unimaginable peaks and valleys, riffs and connections, along the way. "We must find a path that we create together quickly," says Gore, building on his favorite African proverb: "If you wish to go quickly, go alone. If you wish to go far, go together." Unlike politics where the game is partisanship and one-upmanship Gore sees his new path as one "that builds a consensus...it would take a lot to disabuse me of the notion that my highest and best use is to keep building that consensus."

His present track has carried Gore "to a new state of grace" while a return to politics would risk his losing touch with the man he has become. As a visionary he

improvises more, “giving freer rein to matters of the heart and spirit than he ever could as a candidate.” Gore’s wife Tipper says she sees the same person and also “a new person who is free and liberated and doing exactly what he wants to do... he is now more comfortable with who he is, he is doing what he is most passionate about, that’s why it’s working.” Al Gore puts it like this, “And now it’s easier for me to just let it fly.” Like flying, what happens when you speak your mind and you speak your truth is both liberating and magical.

The following words of poet Antonio Machado give meaning to Gore’s unexpected journey: “Pathwalker, there is no path. You must make the path as you walk.” Pooley says that a clue to how Gore found his power lies at the end of the poem, as the poet reveals his desire “to be what I have never been... a man all alone, walking with no road, with no mirror.”

### **A leap of faith:**

When starting any new enterprise there will be countless unforeseen hurdles to jump, especially with alternative entrepreneurs. Relative to standard businesses, there are fewer ‘green’ prototypes out there to test the market for buyers or to build upon. Whether you are working for a progressive company, own your own business or are an environmental advocate, making your mark on the world, giving back to the world is the sure sign of one who has found a path with heart. Many lay low and wait, sadly, and before they know it their old and still waiting; and few have the strength to pursue what they believe. It takes courage to live intentionally within your present community and to live within the limitations of your present self and situation. It takes strength to endure a system that often seems at odds with what you believe in.

**The Eagle:** The heart of the mother eagle quivers as she coaxes her unfledged offspring toward the shelf of the sheer cliff. “Why does the thrill of soaring have to begin with the fear of falling?” she wonders. She knows the answer: “until children learn how to soar they would not understand the privilege of being an eagle.” Despite her own and her mother’s fears, the young eagle approached the precipice, looked straight down some two thousand feet, looked back into her mothers eyes and said “Push.”

**Quotes and Works Cited; Chapter Eighteen:** Pooley calls Gore the leader who does everything in his power to “sound the alarm about the climate crisis. (Pooley, Eric: Time Magazine, The Last temptation of Al Gore. May 28, 2007)