

## **Dedication, Acknowledgements and Preface**

### **01.1 Dedication**

Dedicated to Erin Caleigh Renner, born April 8, 2015, and to all of the children for whom we are the custodians of their future.

“Treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children.”

Native American proverb

### **01.2 Acknowledgements**

By choosing to transform this preliminary set of essays into a publically-collaborative, open-source book I wish to acknowledge the contribution of the many students at the University of South Florida who were enrolled over the years in my Forum for a Future Class. I learned far more from them about the art and science of living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century than I could have ever figured out in my own. The most important of which is the power of respectful collaborative efforts.

It is in this spirit that I have invited any interested person to engage with me in the task of revising my first draft material. The subject area is too broad for me to manage on my own. I need help. Most readers will have specific knowledge or perspectives on some topic that I need to know as well. I expect to learn as least as much if not more than I contribute to what will be the final product.

### **01.3 Preface**

This book is written for the Millennials about an emerging millennial civic revolution directed at their parents and grandparents in the form of family political forums. It is about a cross-generational civic process that Millennials need to think about, and that their parents and grandparents need to see coming.

Toward this end, the first chapter sets out the challenge to the Millennials and the forewarning to their parents and grandparents. The challenge is bookend by a final Section on a manual for meeting and responding to the challenge.

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For the first 5,000 years of human history, people lived in the past tense. Yesterday was the best predictor of today and tomorrow. Experience was the teacher. Wisdom grew with age. The elder was respected. Today was yesterday.

For the next 500 years, beginning with the Age of Enlightenment, people gradually started to live in the present tense. Science and technology, the agricultural and industrial revolutions, and modern transportation and communication changed everything. Any thing was possible, now. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the transition was complete. We lived largely in the present tense. The “Baby Boomers” were the defining generation. Today was today.

Now, for first 50 years of this Century, people must make another transition. We must learn to live in the future tense if we are to have a future. We are consuming more resources and creating more waste than the planet can replace or absorb each year. Once again, this has changed everything. Every day lived unsustainably, subtracts from tomorrow. Today is tomorrow.

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It took 100 generations to learn, still imperfectly, how to live in the past tense. It took 10 generation of living in the present tense to take humanity to the absolute limit of the planet. Now, one lifetime, the “Millennials “ are the defining generation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Never before has the human race had to make a total social, political and economic transition in so short of time. Change cannot wait for the previous generation to die. We are all on the same planet together; we must all learn to live in the future tense together.

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But as challenging as that task is, the preceding era has given us the tools we need. The sane science and technologies that transformed us from a primitive to a consuming society has also given us the capacity to understand the impact of human activity on the planet we need to sustain ourselves. Our own personal future is literally in our own hands. We are the ones we have been looking for.

The barrier is not, as in the past, geological forces over which we have no control, nor lack of knowledge about the forces of nature. The barrier is psychology. We have to relinquish our past mental history when ideologies – economic (Marx), social (Jesus) and political (nationalism) provided our personal sense direction. Now, information and knowledge has to become the source for a coherent sense of self-direction. The very science and technology that has taken us to this current point of transition – the necessity of living in

the future tense – is also the means to confront the dilemma we have created for ourselves: How to live peacefully and sustainably on a crowded planet in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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Each substantive chapter in this book was first written as a blog or an op-ed essay in response to some immediate, specific news story. Thus, they are about concrete everyday experiences that capture our attention. They are the details of our life that we must reconsider. Their collective sum is the reality of how we live today that will define tomorrow.

The essays have been organized with bridging material into sections to provide a comprehensive way of thinking about how the important issues we that manifest themselves in many different ways.

The collection provides an implicit internally consistent conceptual framework for Living In the Future Tense. An explicit presentation of this conceptual framework is provided Section IV of the book; although, it may be read first for those readers who prefer to start with a larger theoretical overview than provided by this brief Preface.