

32.2 "I Believe In Us"

For 5,000 years, humans lived in the past tense: "Yesterday was the same as tomorrow." For the next 500 years people lived in the present tense: "Today can be whatever we want it to be." But now, for the next 50 years we must start living in the future tense: "Tomorrow's social, economic and political constraints must become today's reality."

"We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors we borrow it from our children."

Moss Cass

I would end my course each semester with a class entitled "This I believe". It was an opportunity for the students to be reflective, and often very personal.

A common theme among the millennial students was the simple article of faith: "*I believe in us.*"

The millennials are confident they will do a better job than us when it is their turn: "We are open, share, multi-ethnic, accepting, tolerant and connected." And, I would add "they are patient;" perhaps too patient. When their time finally comes it very well might be too late.

They do not share my sense of urgency that, similar to the Arab Spring, it was time for an American Spring. I show the class a video of the Code Pink demonstration at Condoleezza Rice's testimony before the Senate of blood on her hands. Women who were the age of their mothers and grandmothers were arrested and had to be physically carried out of the Senate chambers. They were not impressed; nor of a [flashmob demonstration](#) by millennials at a Target store in response to Target making a \$150,000 contribution to an anti-gay, anti-worker candidate for Governor of MN after the Supreme Court allowed corporations to make unlimited political contributions. That too, was not something that the majority of the students could imagine participating in.



Yet, many of them feel very deeply about social issues. They volunteer to feed the homeless and participate in many direct service activities. They are not, as many adults complain, "too busy texting" to give personal time to community service; they are more generous and caring, I believe, than students in the past.

Generally, they gave good natured accounts of how their parents just "didn't get it" in response to Facebook, texting and the digital world they live in. But, they do talk to their

parents; they are not mad at us, yet. We can and need to engage them. I do not know how much time we have left, but we should make good use of it to cross over the bridge of the generational divide.

The task of living in the future tense is multi-generational. The last chapter of this book (chapter 33) provides a format for holding family political forms. We need to talk to our children and grandchildren about how they see their future, and what are our joint responsibilities for what we are doing today.

It is time for all of us in the establishment to reflect on the fact that our excess has consumed most of our children's and grandchildren's future. We owe them at least our confidence and the mutual respect of participating in the cross-generational cooperation required to repay at least a portion of what we have taken from them.

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

Native American proverb

I, too, believe in them. They are our hope.