

About the Author

Joan Holmes is first and foremost a Planetary Citizen. Her life has been an expression of heart-centered leadership, grounded in Beingness and the deep awareness that We Are One.

As the Founding President of The Hunger Project (1977-2007), she ushered in an entirely new era, shifting global thinking from “hunger is inevitable” to “hunger can end.”

An unyielding advocate for gender equality, Ms. Holmes was a member of the UN Millennium Project Hunger Task Force, where she prioritized gender in strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Currently, Ms. Holmes serves on The Hunger Project’s Global Board and as a strategic advisor to multiple organizations. She has shared her wisdom and experience in dozens of countries, serving as a delegate in UN high-level sessions, testifying before U.S. Congressional Committees and delivering addresses at corporate conferences. Ms. Holmes is a visionary and a pioneer, and a guide, inspiring millions of people around the globe to create a new future for humanity.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to friends and colleagues for encouragement and support, in particular Perch Ducote, an unyielding champion for this Handbook from the start; Mark Winkler, for his creative contributions. Siddhi Ellinghoven, for sharing her yogic wisdom; to Lora Gaston, whose fine-tuning added clarity.

Special acknowledgements to Rebecca Baum for adding eloquence to the communication; Jenna Recuber, one of the first to see the possibility of this Handbook and the driving force behind the outreach efforts.

And

Bob Gutermuth and his organization, Dialog Group, whose generous gift of time, resources, and design brilliance brought the Handbook to life.

The Planetary Citizen's Handbook

A Journey from Separation To Interconnectedness

Joan Holmes

Dedication

As I sat down to write this dedication, I first thought of the activists of the Hunger Project. They are the visionaries and pioneers who took on creating a paradigm shift from "hunger is inevitable" to "hunger can end." Their audacious courage to create a new context succeeded. In this new context, the world commits to end hunger, hunger victims become new leaders, and lives are saved. The work continues to inspire and empower people worldwide.

Then I thought of the bold, unstoppable youth who've taken on climate change and *will not stop* until they succeed. I knew they belonged in this dedication, along with activists throughout the world who are inspired by a multitude of causes.

Then the millions who don't consider themselves activists came to mind. They are the people who strive every day to create a life for themselves and their families and, in so doing, uplift the community and our human family. This handbook is dedicated to those heroes as well.

Tune in to the surrounding life, the plants and animals, the breeze, the sunlight. Be generous with your care and attention, as you would with any important relationship. Reflect on the below contemplation:

Find your love of nature, experience the awe of her beauty and her creativity. Begin to sense her intrinsic wisdom, have reverence for her unfathomable richness and diversity. Experience gratitude for her very existence.

Call Together A Community of Planetary Citizens. Share this Handbook with family, friends, and colleagues. Invite them to take the journey with you. Create small discussion groups to review the Handbook and compare "notes from the field." Celebrate each person's contribution to calling forth the new consciousness.

Discover your own unique expression of Planetary Citizenship. May this Handbook be the start of an inquiry of discovery, engagement, and exploration. Return to it again and again, as you would a poem or a contemplation, each time letting it wash over you newly. Let it be a source of renewal, a gift to yourself of time and space, and a catalyst to discover who you "be" in the new age of Interconnectedness.

Grounded in this declaration, you will begin to express your planetary citizenship. You will discover new ways of being, knowing, perceiving, and relating. The suggestions below can guide you:

Bring stillness into your life. Stillness can be found in solitude and quiet. It can also be found in a meandering walk, a sunset, or the depths of a painting.

What is extraordinary, and little known, is that in stillness a new dimension becomes available — Beingness. This is a game changer.

Over time, the experience of Beingness deepens. Our sense of self expands. Beingness becomes a wellspring of love, creativity, wholeness, and peace.

Our embrace of the new dimension of Beingness is the evolutionary transformation.

Relate to others from a new awareness as partners, collaborators, and cocreators. Notice what shifts in your relationships with family and friends. Experience a growing sense of compassion for yourself and others.

Create a new relationship with nature. Seek out a national forest, city park, or your own backyard.

Finally, I reflected on Nature — majestic, endlessly creative, a source of healing and harmony. This handbook is dedicated to the plants, animals, mountains, oceans, forests, and rivers, which have nurtured, healed, and sustained us, even as we have faltered in our understanding, connection, and reverence for the wondrous life of this planet.

In the end, this dedication became more of a love letter — to you and to all of us who are interconnected to each other and to a planet that sustains our very existence.

I am humbled and grateful to be alive with you at such a momentous time — as we awaken to the truth of our oneness and the vast, miraculous web of existence that unites us all.

Joan Holmes

Invitation

We are here to awaken from the illusion of separateness.

— Thich Nhat Hanh

We are living at an extraordinary time in human history – a time of great crisis and turmoil, a time of great promise.

The ways we relate to one another and our natural world are no longer working. Breakdowns are all around us – economic collapse, civil wars, global migration, terrorism, growing inequality, increased hunger and poverty, global food insecurity, despots rising to power, and a pandemic affecting all of us.

The greatest existential threat we are facing is climate change. A landmark UN report states that humans have pushed the climate into "unprecedented" territory. The UN chief calls the findings "A Code Red for humanity."

You may have wished to live at a less complicated time, in a more predictable and safer world.

Yet, you are here now. And you are needed.

The opportunity before you, before all of us, is to create a transformation in human consciousness.

NOW WHAT?

A Guide To Calling Forth The New Era of Interconnectedness

You are not an alien. You are not a stranger. You are not an observer.

You belong here.

You are deeply rooted and profoundly connected to this Earth, Planet, Universe.

The Cosmos lives in you and you in it. You are necessary and integral to calling forth a new paradigm, a new worldview, a new consciousness.

In this moment, you are invited to claim your planetary citizenship:

I declare myself to be a Planetary Citizen.

I will call forth the new era of Interconnectedness.

I will live my life consistent with the understanding that We Are One.

Beingness is our natural state, and as such, is accessible to all of us, at any time, through stillness. When we become still, our mind quiets. Our experience of self expands. We glimpse our inner vastness.

This expanded awareness is the space of wisdom, creativity, and love. Peace is present. We realize that we are whole and have always been so.

When we interact with others at the level of true Beingness, we are Interconnected beyond the veil of social conditioning. Each person is seen, heard, and experienced at the most profound level.

“I Love You” becomes “I Am You.”

We Are One

Already there are signs that this transformation is underway, that we are emerging from a world of separation and fragmentation to one of interconnectedness.

At this time of crisis, chaos, and confusion, we must look deep within ourselves.

Are we genuinely separate from nature and other humans living in a competitive, win-lose world? Or is there a more profound truth — that we live in a world where all of us and the natural world that sustains us are interconnected?

This handbook was created to support you in this journey. I invite you to join individuals worldwide who are committed to calling forth a new paradigm, a new world view, a new consciousness.

**The future is calling.
This is our moment.**

Separation

The Prevailing World View

The greatest tragedy of human existence is the illusion of human separateness.

– Albert Einstein

We are witnessing a shift of consciousness and a growing awareness of the oneness of all that exists.

At the same time, there is entrenchment and intensification of the idea that the world is a collection of independent beings, where the life and death of one being is unrelated to the life and death of another.

This idea, the "separation world view," has formed the basis of our understanding of reality for centuries, shaping our thinking, beliefs, feelings, and behavior.

During this era of separation, control and domination have been the primary means of survival and success. We've come to prize individuation, at times inflating the ego to an excessive degree.

There is less hierarchy and more networking.

“Competitive and adversarial” becomes “cooperative and inspirational.”

Leader/follower makes way for co-creators.

We come from the whole, and wholeness is then expressed through individual parts.

Inherent in Interconnectedness is the discovery and experience of Beingness.

In the consciousness of separation, we “think-do” control and dominance.

In the new consciousness of Interconnectedness, we “be” love, compassion, and empathy.

And while the world knows everything about doing, it knows almost nothing about Being. We’ve come to confuse our identities with what we do rather than who we “be.” Job titles, the number of children, list of accomplishments, net worth, these attributes overshadow, and even obscure, our beingness.

Beingness is existence itself.

It is the essence of who we are — the domain of true fulfillment that is always, already enough.

Our world economy and society share supply chains, communication, and travel. We see the same images, eat the same food, buy the same products. As of early 2020, we share the same disease.

We are connected at the level of humanity.

The climate crisis, the pandemic, and our many complex global breakdowns are forcing us to recognize that our welfare depends on the actions of others over whom we have no control—and likewise, their welfare depends on us.

We are awakening from a world view of separateness to one of interconnectedness. We are evolving from excessive individuation and division to unity through inclusion and diversity.

We are coming to understand on the deepest level that to harm another is to harm ourselves.

This shift from separation to Interconnectedness is a seismic, evolutionary transformation that calls for a different way of being, knowing, perceiving, and relating.

“I alone can” becomes “we together will.”

We've developed a dependence on thinking and doing, the dimension of human experience that drives achievement and success. While this has catalyzed significant scientific, industrial, and technological progress, Beingness, the other dimension of human experience, has tended to be ignored or dismissed.

Beingness is the dimension of satisfaction and fulfillment. Whereas thinking-doing is timebound and goal-driven, Beingness is timeless, whole, and complete.

Without Beingness, we can experience ourselves as fundamentally alone. As a result, we build ourselves up to protect and defend the "isolated me" from others.

We restrict the people we know and care for to a small group of individuals like us, with whom we feel safe and secure. We wall ourselves off from those who seem "different," reducing our understanding of life from their perspective.

We feel a sense of incompleteness which fuels a relentless drive for more — more power, more control, more possessions. We don't sense the suffering we cause others.

The consequences extend far beyond our individual lives. Separation has given rise to extreme financial inequality and an economic system that prioritizes profit over people and the environment. It is the root cause of our constant conflicts, warfare, and oppression.

Entire groups of people are viewed as separate and labeled inferior. They are marginalized, mistreated, and disowned by society. Assigned second-class citizenship, they endeavor to create meaningful lives in the constrained space left to them. In the extreme, they are persecuted and killed for belonging to a particular religion, ethnic group, or gender — because they are viewed as the “other.”

Given this illusion of separateness:

What kind of world *did* we create?

What kind of world *could* we create?

There have been a few rare individuals who saw through this illusion. They spoke of love, compassion, kindness, and humility and pointed to the very oneness of all creation.

Interconnectedness

The Emerging World View

We are called to take part in a great transformation. Our survival as a species is threatened by global warming, economic meltdown, and an ever-increasing gap between rich and poor. Yet these threats offer an opportunity to awaken as an interconnected and beloved community.

-Desmond Tutu

Everything and everyone in the entire cosmos is interconnected — with each other and the whole.

Poets, shamans, philosophers, and mystics have always known this. More recently, scientists have reached the same conclusion.

The human experience is a shared experience. The details of our individual lives may be dramatically different, but we all know and share the experiences of pain and anguish, joy and love.

And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality.

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.

We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

The future is here.

The transition is epic and unavoidable.

Stay connected – we're all in this together.

Now, possibly for the first time in history, we have the rare and profound privilege of calling forth the new consciousness. This sacred mission requires nothing less than an evolutionary transformation.

This is our moment.

You have been called for such a time as this.

The opportunity is now.

Nature

Are humans a part of Nature or Separate from Nature?

Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.

- Chief Seattle, 1854

For the last few centuries, our answer has been
- humans are separate from and superior to nature. And nature has no value apart from what it provides to humans.

At its most extreme, this view sees nature as a set of resources to be recklessly exploited for human gain.

How did we get here?

Philosophers and church authorities in the 17th century began to view nature as no more than a collection of objects. In the words of René Descartes, the brilliant mathematician and one of the chief architects of this era, "The conquest of nature is to be achieved by number and measure."

Other times, the egoistic illusion all but disappears, transcended by the growing awareness that we are one.

The turmoil, upheaval, and disruption of these colliding world views are felt at every level, from the town square to the international assembly. We witness shocking abuses and extraordinary altruism, breakdowns as well as breakthroughs. As Planetary Citizens, we must learn to navigate both, understanding that breakdown often leads to breakthrough.

Humanity faces two global disruptions of unprecedented scale and impact during this evolutionary transformation: the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis.

"The Pandemic Is A Portal"

by Arundhati Roy

[Excerpt from *Financial Times* article]

Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to "normality", trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists.

The Metamorphic Moment

**Everything Is Happening
Everywhere All At Once.**

We delight in the beauty of the butterfly but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

-Maya Angelou

The metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly is a spectacular event. There is a transitional period when neither caterpillar nor butterfly exists when old structures are dissolved, and new ones have yet to form.

Humanity is undergoing a similar metamorphosis. An evolutionary transformation has begun. This phase is challenging, unavoidable, and necessary for transformation to be realized.

In this metamorphic phase, the remnants of the old separation world view clash with the emerging consciousness of the new. At times the old paradigm may seem to dominate, displaying itself with ever-increasing violence.

This notion was fundamental in Descartes' philosophy of mind-body dualism. The body, formerly animated by soul or spirit, was now an automaton controlled by the mind. Beauty, love, compassion, any of the qualities that make us human, became irrelevant because they could not be measured.

By the second half of the 18th century, it was generally agreed that everything in the known universe could be comprehended, quantified, and exploited for human gain.

This dualism separated us not only from nature and each other but also from ourselves.

This thinking underlies many accepted beliefs and practices that have brought humanity and the planet to a place of extreme vulnerability. Instead of living harmoniously with nature and expressing a sense of reverence for all life, our relationship can, at best, be described as one of separation and alienation.

And our distancing from nature makes us numb to its peril.

After decades of degradation of the environment, the conquest of nature has been achieved.

But at what cost?

The main effects of environmental degradation are increased poverty, overcrowding, famine, weather extremes, species loss, acute and chronic medical illness, war and human rights abuses, and an increasingly unstable world.

If humanity were wiped out tomorrow, it is estimated the natural world would take 3 to 5 million years to recover from our attempts to control and dominate nature.

And it isn't just nature that has been abused; we have compromised our very souls.

A Lakota proverb states that “when a man moves away from nature, his heart becomes hard.”

When our hearts harden, we shut down our feelings of empathy and caring. We become anesthetized to the pain and suffering humans are causing to ourselves, other life forms, and the planet itself.

It is almost impossible to come to terms with the way we have mistreated the Earth.

Healing is possible. But only if we embrace the truth that humanity and nature are inextricably connected.

It is time to move forward. Our job, our sacred opportunity, is to connect humanity's heart, mind, and soul to nature.

The opportunity is now.

The planet is in peril.

The future is here.