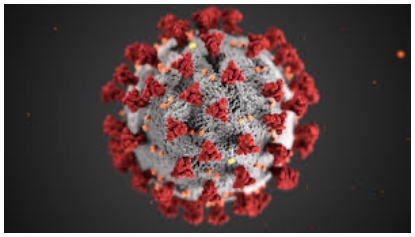

Reality Tells Me What To Do:
The Peacebuilding Pivot

Charles Hauss

We don't get to choose when we were born.

We don't choose what natural disasters, epidemiological emergencies, stock market crashes, tyrannical regimes, or wars our generations face.

We only get to choose how we react.

--Wendy Beth Hyman

It has been one hell of a year

Or a bit more accurately, it has been an earth shattering six months, since only one of the crises that prompted me to write this was anywhere close to being on center stage when COVID-19 struck—the presidential election.

Like most of my friends and neighbors, I've been stuck at home and glued to my Zoom screen since early March. I could not take part in the protests that have been swirling around us. I'm an old guy with one of those ill-defined pre-existing conditions, which means that I've had to take the social distancing side of things extremely seriously.

I therefore, had a lot of time in which I coudl reconsider some big questions about myself and my career. Among other things, I found myself going back to my origins as a political activist and then as a movement scholar, both of took on new meaning this spring and summer.

While finishing an introductory textbook for peace and conflict studies students last year, I had already realized that we needed to think in terms of a movement. I also already had my doubts about whether we could build the kind of movement we dreamed of by focusing on peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

This year's reflections led me to the idea of what might seem to you as a slight pivot toward thinking of ourselves as part of a movement that we would only be a part of—and initially a fairly small part at that. If I'm right—and it is a big if--we peacebuilders need to make what the founders of startups refer to as a pivot, a term many of them explicitly borrowed from basketball.

When a player pivots on the court, one of his/her feet remains firmly planted on the floor, while the other one starts a bold move toward the basket. Similarly, Netflix pivoted when it decided to continue mailing DVDs to subscriber (the first foot staying on the floor) while boldly experimenting with streaming video (the bold move toward the basket).

We do have to keep that one foot firmly planted on the metaphorical floor, because we have accomplished a lot in the nearly forty years since modern peacebuilding and conflict resolution were born. In that time, we've established ourselves as a professional field, built communities of practice, and accomplished quite a bit.

That said, we aren't where we want to be. My friend, Julia Roig, laments the fact that we don't routinely have a seat at the "grown ups table" when major public policies are made. We do occasionally get to join it, but only be for the equivalent of snacks or appetizers. To use startup language again, we have barely begun to take our work to scale.

That's where the other foot comes into play. If we don't pivot and take a dramatic step in a different direction that I'll be describing here, we won't get there any time soon. Given the events so far in 2020, it makes sense to pivot toward and join forces with at least some of the activists who work on race, inequality, public health, climate change, gun violence, gender, and more. To be blunt, that probably means downplaying peacebuilding as an immediate goal as we work with activists for whom "their" issue is the top priority.

I am not, however, downplaying the importance of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. If I'm right, our skills will be needed more than ever before, because we can help the entire movement for lasting change pivot toward making constructive proposals that could lead to that elusive paradigm shift. When and if we do that, we might be able to pull off the kind of paradigm shift that I've been ranting about since I encountered the term in my first political science research methods class in 1966.

On the one hand, that might seem obvious to you, and my sense that we need to pivot may seem like making a political mountain out of a molehill. However, if you bear with me, I think I can convince you that it makes sense to concentrate on the specific issues we face and help introduce a peacebuilding and conflict resolution perspective into the movements that already exist or will need to be created to address them.

Therefore, I plan to use this essay in two ways In the months and years to come. First, the scholar in me will continue documenting ways in which we are already pivoting. Second, the activist in me that led me to become a movement scholar will do what I can to make the pivot happen by identifying organizations that are already doing things and help them build broader coalitions, especially ones that cross our issue-specific silos.

Reality Tells Me What To Do

I committed a journalistic cardinal sin in this paper's title. I buried the lede. I put its main point in the subtitle. Since I obviously did so intentionally, let me explain.

As I struggled to make sense of the dizzying blur of events and my own emotional reactions to them, I found myself returning to a weekend seminar that Beyond War held for its national leadership team in 1988 which gave me the title for this paper and for much of what I've tried to do since that retreat ended.

We got an email with a six-word agenda without any accompanying explanation a few days before we arrived—reality tells me what to do.

I giggled.

How could we spend an entire weekend (albeit in a redwood grove in the scenic mountains of Ben Lomond CA) discussing something that seemed obvious?

I was wrong.

The seminar leaders used that statement to help us work through the implications of living in a world that in which change was the only constant that was also becoming more interdependent every day.

It was an amazingly powerful weekend. We may have started by talking about the Cold War that was already ending, but we ended up with discussions that led us all to bring our personal values and our social goals more into sync than they had ever been before. As with everything else Beyond War did, it made me more self-aware both of my own goals, values, and blinders and of the changing realities of the world as well.

That weekend had such an impact on me that I put myself through a version of this exercise any time the real world throws an unexpected monkey wrench into my plans. Like this year. Only now we're talking about multiple monkey wrenches.

I also had a more immediate reason to revisit those six words this summer too. Late in 2019, I published an undergraduate textbook, *From Conflict Resolution to Peacebuilding*. Its last two chapters focused on the future of a field I've dedicated my adult life to. The first dealt with how the field should evolve; the second explored ways my readers could get involved.

How to Read This Essay

I began this document thinking it would be an update to my textbook in the light of events since the pandemic began. It later morphed into an essay that stands on its own. Still, it is not a polished document like a book's chapter. Nor is it etched in stone. In fact, I will update it as need be. So, read it as a draft and feel free to email me suggestions—and criticisms.

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The minute I sent the manuscript to my editor, I knew I would have to update the conclusion within a year, because I knew that the 2020 American election would have an impact on the future of the field. But, like everyone else I know, I was not prepared for the events that burst into our lives this year—the COVID 19 pandemic, the resulting recession, the global protests that broke out after George Floyd's murder, the political failures of governments around the world, and the magnified stakes of the 2020 election.

By July, I realized that I had to update the book to help students assess my conclusions in the light of those tumultuous events, which were, of course, still playing themselves out when I sat down to write in August. But once I began, a simple update turned into this larger essay that was written for everyone, not just my student readers.

I would not take back much of what I wrote. Still, with only a year's hindsight, the conclusions I reached seemed insipid—at best. At the time, I thought that I was issuing a stirring call to action. Now, it's clear that I grossly underestimated two key things.

First is the magnitude of the challenges we face. We knew about most of the problems at the end of 2019. There were, for instance, plenty of people who warned us about a pandemic at some point in the near future. All Americans were already aware of the role systemic racism has played in our country's past and present.

The shocking part was the speed with which the 2020 versions of these crises hit and the emotional toll they took, including on me. Like everyone else I know, I've been on an emotional roller coaster since the pandemic began—and I'm pretty resilient.

Second and even more worrisome is the fact that I missed many of the opportunities for changing the world that are now unfolding in front of our eyes. Americans and people around the world are more open to change than they have been at any time since the late 1960s. We seem more willing to adopt new cultural norms and endorse sweeping new public policy reforms that could change social and political life for decades to come. They might even go far enough to produce something like my beloved paradigm shift.

So, what follows is a stand alone essay that I will probably use as the framework for a new book which will focus on the steps we are taking to deal with these crises. In the pages that follow, I make three main points:

- We face a crisis or, better yet, crises, the likes of which we have not seen since the Great Depression, if then. A lot is at stake, ranging from our personal health to the health of our democracy and even the health of our entire planet. The choices we make in addressing those issues will go a long way toward determining what the late Jonathan Shell called the fate of the earth which helped convince me return to peacebuilding. Overcoming these crises will be even harder than most of us think. We can't solve any one of the individual issues separately or quickly or easily. We also can't make much progress if we continue to rely on business as usual. Hence the need for a paradigm shift.
- We peacebuilders will have a role to play in producing that paradigm shift. However, if we are to do so successfully, we will have to pivot and adopt a new way of defining our work, because conflict resolution, per se, will probably not be "the" issue that draws people to the movement. We will have to expand what peacebuilding entails by building a massive movement or movements, which will have to bigger and broader than anything we've ever done before. To use the language so many of us are using in 2020, it will have to be intersectional and inclusive, and we will have to take it scale.
- Most of the people who read my book are undergraduates and, therefore, in their late teens or early twenties. So, too, are many of the people who have been in the streets so far this year. So, if my words are going to have any kind of lasting impact, I have to acknowledge that there is something to the "OK Boomer" meme and help my younger readers (which is just about all of them) figure out how they can define their own role as part of the leadership team that makes the paradigm shift happen.

I'll start out with some distressing and even depressing trends. But by the time you get to page 12, I'll have begun my own pivot toward a discussion of the hopeful things I see going on around me, some of which I've been lucky enough to be a part of. I'll end with a complicated and truly ugly chart describing a complicated (though hopefully not too ugly) period of social change. Still, if I've done my job, I'll also have helped you see ways in

which you—or anyone else--can become part of that leaderships team I mentioned in final bullet point above.

From Danger Toward Opportunity

Make no mistake about it.

We are in the midst of a crisis.

The worst crisis of my adult lifetime.

And it will probably get worse.

Recall, however, that we peacebuilders have an unusual way of thinking about crises. We see them as turning points, as times when we *can* make momentous decisions.

Many of us use a metaphor while trying to make that point. Most (but not all) linguists argue that the two characters that the ancient Chinese brought together to convey what we mean by the word crisis stand for danger and opportunity respectively. Therefore, we tend to think of a crisis as a time to identify the opportunities that do exist no matter how dire the circumstances may seem, build on them, and eventually produce something akin to the paradigm shift I have already mentioned too many times.

Danger 1 –The Problems

I have no desire to overwhelm you with evidence about the problems we face. All I want to do is to gloss over the familiar events in a way that lays the foundation for beginning the shift toward the opportunities and, thus, the pivot.

The Pandemic. Any such list has to start with the pandemic.

Even though we knew it was coming, it still came as a sudden shock. In my case, I decided to take a break at noon on March 12 and watch the Michigan game in the Big 10 men's basketball tournament. As soon as I got to the right channel, I realized that something weird was happening. A few seconds later, the announcer said that the game was postponed. The players stopped warming up and headed to the locker rooms.

The pandemic had suddenly hit close to home. By the end of the weekend, almost everything I did had ground to a halt. George Mason University stopped classes and went online. The Alliance for Peacebuilding shut its offices, too. Events I had organized were canceled.. Sporting events were canceled. Within a week, the economy shut down and we began talking about essential workers, social distance, and contact tracing.

Of course, I already knew about the pandemic and that I was at risk given my age. Still, I was not prepared for how much my life was about to change. As I write in early September, it has been six months since I've been in a store or even opened my wallet. Our food is delivered or we pre-pay and pick it up at the local farmer's market. I haven't been within six feet of another human being other than my immediate family members and that only consists of five other people.

I'm actually extremely lucky. We can afford to do all of our shopping on line. Our grandkids (and their parents) live in our neighborhood. I have always preferred working

from home and being by myself. I already spent most of my work time in meetings with people who don't live in Washington and had been using Zoom regularly for at least five years.

You have our own stories about the pandemic and how it affected you and the people around you. You also don't need me to repeat the statistics that show how woeful a job the United States has done in responding to it. You don't need me to tell you that the pandemic alone should be enough to give us pause.

Or that maybe its time to ask if our basic values and institutions are up to meeting the challenges we face today.

The Recession. By mid-March, it was clear that much of the world's economy would have to be shut down if we wanted to control—let alone stop—the virus's spread. You don't need me to tell fill in the details on the recession either.

The economic effects of the pandemic have rippled throughout the society and done so in ways that cast our *societal* pre-existing conditions in a new and more worrisome light. Within a matter of a three weeks, as many as thirty million Americans lost their jobs. In early March, unemployment was at record lows; by early April, we worried that the unemployment rate might get as high as it was during the Great Depression.

Within a few days, it became clear that while most upper middle-class professionals could pivot and work from home, that was not true for everyone. What we came to euphemistically call "essential workers" couldn't stay home, do their jobs, and still get a paycheck. Some of them were doctors and other health care professionals. For the most part, though, they were the men and women who had to show up at the supermarkets, drug stores, factories, and warehouses that stayed open. These are the people who drop my Whole Foods orders on my doorstep as well as the first providers whom the grateful residents of New York clapped for each evening.

We also learned that the pandemic's medical and economic effects hit the most vulnerable the hardest. These included a lot of older people like my 98 year old mother or others who live in rural areas, all of whom saw their services get cut and their isolation grow. Even more importantly, by early April, it was clear that pandemic was hitting people of color particularly hard for a whole host of reasons. They were more likely to get the disease and less likely to get the medical coverage that could increase their chances of surviving.

And that was before George Floyd was killed.

Black lives do matter. We already were in tough shape on May 25 when news about George Floyd's death broke. To be honest, I was surprised by ay the country's rapid and massive respondse. After all, plenty of young black men and women have been killed by white police officers. It was almost as if we had become numb to that kind of violence and to the arbitrary and inappropriate use of force by the very individuals who are supposedly sworn to protect us.

This time, I was glad to be proven wrong.

I don't know how much of it had to do the accumulated grievances people harbored toward the police, how much of it had to do with the pandemic, or how much of it had to do with the Trump administration, but I definitely underestimated how dramatically the anger could be turned into action. Again, I don't need to fill you in on the details.

This time, however, the protests were different. Despite all the anger, there was surprisingly little violence committed by the protesters—although there was plenty committed by the police. For the first time since the height of the civil rights movement in the first half of the 1960s, there were lots of white faces in those crowds.

Out on a Limb

I inserted an "out on a limb" box in From Conflict Resolution to Peacebuilding whenever I was about to say something controversial. I wanted to make certain that my readers knew that I was going out on a limb while encouraging them to question what I was about to say and let me know if they thought I was wrong.

As far as this essay is concerned, it's one big out on a limb box. Read it as such. And react.

We as a people changed along with the protests. In my fifty years as a political scientist, I've never seen public opinion shift so quickly in so short a time. The vast majority of Americans supported the idea that black lives matter or kneeling when the national anthem is played. Most of us were glad to see monuments that honored Confederate leaders in the civil war come down. A majority even supported reforming the police.

The election. No one was surprised when the first three crises only raised the stakes for this fourth one as the year dragged on. Donald Trump has been a polarizing figure since he entered political life in a meaningful way in the early 2010s. Recall that he started his political career by championing the so-called birther theory claiming that President Barack Obama was not born in the United States and therefore could not legally serve as president. His rhetoric and now his actions as president have continued to drive deeper and deeper wedges among us.

This is not the place to go into President Trump's record or the reasons why he acts the way he does. In fact, I really only want to make two points in this section.

First, the United States faced its most divisive election in at least a century. Second, it's not just the United States. Of course, Donald Trump is both a unique individual and uniquely American. Nonetheless, the world has more than its share of other populist leaders whose rise to power rests on nationalist and racist claims. Even more widespread are the governmental shortcomings when it comes to dealing with the virus, recession,

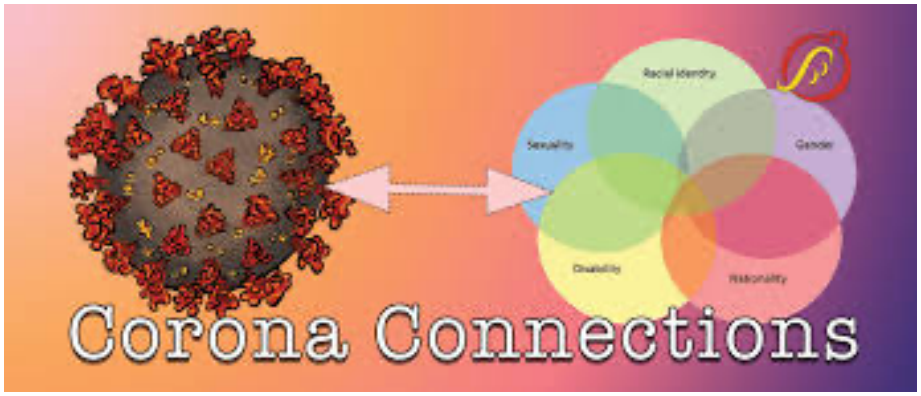
and diversity issues, though it is easy to argue that the United States is in a class of its own on all of these fronts.

Danger 2–Intersectionality

You may need to spend more time thinking about the intersectionality or the overlap among them. The term intersectionality entered the academic lexicon in 1989 when Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw used it to explore the overlap between gender, race, and other issues she studied. Her work opened a floodgate of empirical research and theory building that looked at the ways that various forms of oppression reinforced and even magnified each other.

In time, the idea spread beyond gender studies and found echoes in most of the social sciences, including in the academic research on peace and conflict resolution. In my own work, I have been using the term wicked problems to convey the same idea. In retrospect, I should have at least alluded to intersectionality because it is a term that young activists have been using of late, a theme I will be building toward in this rest of this document.

This year's wave of protests only reinforced that trend as reflected in this image that combined the one found most frequently in the feminist literature with the stylized image of the COVID-19 virus which we are now all too familiar with. Given its roots in gender and Africana studies, it should come as no surprise that the most common image of intersectionality draws our attention to gender identity, sexual orientation, race, nationality, and ablism. I intentionally picked this version not only because it links intersectionality to the COVID-19 pandemic but because its low resolution and small size mean that you probably can't read the labels. That may have been a bad aesthetic decision on my part, but it does convey the point I want to make as a result. It really doesn't matter what issues you put in the pastel circles. They all overlap or, literally, intersect.



In the case of COVID-19, some highly placed individuals and the offices they led did worry about a pandemic long before the first cases were reported. More generally, epidemiologists have learned a lot about the spread of diseases, which peacebuilders have seen in the work of organizations like Cure Violence. Long term planners in the Pentagon had spent years doing the kind of scenario planning I just discussed around the impact of pandemics. The Obama administration created a unit in the National Security Council that helped the country prepare for them.

New Yorker reporter, Lawrence Wright, was so frightened by those earlier below the radar screen discussions that he decided to write a novel about a pandemic that had far more devastating effects than the one we are currently living through. *The End of October* was published literally as COVID-19 was shutting the world down.[1]

Thus, if Wright is right, the COVID-19 pandemic will not be the last or the most severe of these black swan events. If the responses of the American, British, Italian, Iranian, and dozens of other governments tell us anything, it is that we are ill-prepared to handle unexpected shocks of this magnitude because our governments lack the ability to act either quickly or coherently.

Along those same lines, I listened to a podcast of the NPR program, *OnPoint*, on the threat of evictions during the pandemic on the day I first drafted these lines. Meghna Chakrabarti's experts didn't agree on every point, but they did have one common message for their listeners. If the federal, state, and national governments did not restore the various moratoriums on evictions, it would probably set off a tidal wave of cascading effects.[2]

Between twenty and thirty million people living in rented houses and apartments might not be able to pay the next month's rent and would be subject to eviction. If so, some of the displaced families would move in with friends and relatives in ever more crowded housing units, thereby increasing their chances of getting the virus. Many would become homeless with all the negative consequences that come with living on the streets. Children would almost certainly see their educations interrupted. Many would also have adverse mental health effects. Of course, those most at risk of eviction were also among the poorest people in the country. A disproportionate number of them were people of color.

In short, we end up a conclusion that looks very similar to the ones Professor Crenshaw and the other intersectionality pioneers came to. These intersection issues amount to wicked problems that we have to address them together. As governments around the world have discovered, that is all but impossible to do given our social, political, and environmental paradigms today.

It is easy to make the case that the other disruptive events of 2020 should not have come as a shock. If anything, race, economic inequality and the toxic effects of political polarization had been on our agenda for a long time—centuries in the case of race. What surprised us was the suddenness with which we had to deal with them after they reached a tipping point, itself something we have known about at least since Malcolm Gladwell wrote his bestseller with that title twenty years ago.

Unfortunately, there is a kind of double bottom line here. To begin with, we are not very good at dealing with intersectionality or wicked problems or whatever term you prefer. Add to that the fact that only a few governments and a few corporations are very good at anticipating the events that could lead to the kinds of unexpected events that have massive and disruptive events that the likes of Taleb warned us about.

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1 Lawrence Wright. *The End of October*. (New York: Random House,2020).

[2] Ironically, the CDC issued at least a partial ban on evictions a month later on September 2, the day I finished editing this draft of the paper.

Dangers 3--The Challenge We Face

I do have to add one more depressing piece to the puzzle before we turn to the oportunities.

It's a visual demonstration I've used in every public talk I've given in the last few years which is summarized in these three photos which my wife took when we visited Rondine, Cittadella della Pace in June 2019. I had just done a live version of it with a group of Rondine's students and realized that I would need it in the book.

The first depicts the impact peacebuilders had in the early 1980s when conflict resolution emerged as an academic field and the first peacebuilding groups were created. Don't strain your eyes, because even if I were in front of you, my thumb and forefinger would be so close together that they would practically be touching. That's how weak we were.

In the second, they are about an inch apart and represent our impact in 2019. I actually made the gap a little bigger than I usually do, because we were heading to Rome the next day to have a meeting that would include a leading journalist, two member of the Italian Senate, and a Rondine graduate who was a member of the Armenian parliament. So, we at least had a glimpse of what Julia Roig calls the grown-ups' table.

Even in this small version, you shouldn't have any trouble seeing how big the third gap is, which I use to depict how far we still had to go. I wanted the people who attended my workshops and my readers to see that we still have a long way to go and that we won't get there (however you define there) by relying on business as usual strategies, however impressive our gains have been

It's About the Paradigm, Stupid

At long last, that brings us to the opportunities which actually exist on two levels, both of which lead us from the dangers into the opportunities. First, peacebuilders are needed in the movements surrounding the specific problems we face. Second and more importantly, our engagement in those movements will make it easier for everyone to see the need to explore the overlaps implicit in intersectionality, get at the roots causes of our problems, and see that a paradigm shift is not only in order, but long overdue.

The right side of history. If the demonstrations since the end of May have shown us anything, it is that people tend to be spurred to take action by racism, the pandemic, inequality, climate change, or some other specific issue and only get to peacebuilding and conflict resolution afterward. Or, to use another term that has gained new prominence of late, most activists want to be "on the right side of history" by taking stands on concrete issues rather than by advocating conflict resolution and other peacebuilding processes.

It may not always seem that way, but peacebuilders and conflict resolution specialists have been the most effective when they've used their skills to solve the kinds of specific problems I mentioned in the previous paragraph. For good or ill, however, we have often lost sight of the fact that our best work has focused on addressing the substantive issues as well as designing great peacebuilding processes.

Take, for example, one of our biggest success stories, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. To be sure, it was a brilliantly designed and implemented peacebuilding project. However, it only worked to the degree that it did because it helped people overcome the substantive problem that made the TRC possible and necessary—overcoming the legacy of apartheid.

Similarly, consider an example that hits closer to home in the United States. Lots of organizations are doing terrific work on polarization by bringing left and right together for discussions of varying length and intensity. However, research is beginning to show that having those discussions *alone* does not have much lasting impact *unless* the dialogue is both tied to specific issues and leads to action, as you will see in my discussion of Resetting the Table's and Build Peace's work below.

Don't get me wrong. The skills we peacebuilding and conflict resolution specialists properly champion will be needed when Americans decide to tackle the underlying causes of the problems we face *and* disagree deeply over the best steps to take in solving them.

Still, it makes as much—and probably more—sense to pivot so that we can focus *as much as possible* on the specific issues at least while we are in the midst of these crises. I frankly find it hard to imagine people making the long-term commitment I'm about to describe *unless* they do so in the context of taking on the systemic nature of racism or any of the structural causes of the other problems that motivate people to become engaged in the first place.

Our paradigms. In fact, the peacebuilder's toolkit is going to be indispensable because average citizens increasingly understand that we cannot meaningful address the issues of the day without also chipping away at their underlying causes which is why we have to help people think in terms of paradigm shifts.

Although I have personally been interested in the topic since I first read Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in my first undergraduate research methods course, it remained an academic interest until I started working with Beyond War. Everything it did—including the weekend on reality tells me what to do-- focused on changing what Albert Einstein referred to as our modes of thinking regarding conflict. The

work revolved not only around changing how other people thought and acted. We helped ourselves surface the often unspoken assumptions in our own personal paradigms so that, to repeat a phrase, reality *could* tell us what to do.

I have watched any number of individuals change the way they deal with conflict since then. I have also seen some once fringe ideas enter the mainstream, including win/win conflict resolution and the term paradigm shift itself. However, it has only been in the last few months that I've felt that we have a real opportunity to spark a wholesale shift in the way people deal with the conflicts that are a part of our everyday lives.

I was helped here by the futurist, Amy Zalman whose consulting firms, Prescient 2050, prepares its clients for success in the world that will exist thirty or so years from now. Obviously, we don't know what the world will be like in 2050. At best, we can sketch some fuzzy outlines of what life will be like then. However, Zalman and other futurists help business and government leaders anticipate the most plausible future trends and plan accordingly.

Zalman stands out from most of her colleagues because she assumes that all of the tough problems we face today have common origins in the paradigms we use when we try to solve them. Therefore, planning for a future which is characterized by accelerating rates of change without addressing the core values and assumptions that make up those paradigms is a recipe for disaster. In short, she tries to get her clients to open their eyes to a future in which we do things in dramatically different ways that are more in keeping with the realities of an ever changing and increasingly interdependent world.

In that light, consider these words from her website.

> *People feel change so acutely right now because it is breaking down our most basic categories—public, private, male, female, war, peace, human, machine. Our first task is making sense of the future is to recognize that we need new paradigms, and to tell new stories.*

As you will see in the rest of this document, helping people "recognize that we need new paradigms, and to tell new stories" is the most important skill set that peacebuilding and conflict resolution specialists bring to "the table" these days. In particular, how do we help average citizens, activists, and our leaders see that the breakdown she describes is systematic and structural and that it's not just about race or gender or economics of the climate?

It's about everything. Or, as a recent report from the UK's Royal Academy of Engineers put it, we're not dealing with isolated problems but with increasing evidence that entire systems we rely on for our survival are failing.

The Pivot

You may have noticed that I haven't used the word pivot since p. 2. The reason is simple. I had to put the current crises in context before you could see why the particular pivot I have in mind makes sense.

As I do, I will be following the same basic trajectory that I used in the previous section. I'll start with specific issues, build out toward a paradigm shift, before reachin the new and exciting role peacebuilders could play in making that pivot play itself out .

I will also gradually add examples of initiatives that are already under way that could be part of that pivot. Here, however, there will be a different kind of progression as I build toward what might be my next book and the research agenda that would shape it. If I'm right, I will also be building a framework for coordinating and accelerating movements that are working to change our paradigms and the stories that we tell about ourselves in ways that transcend anything I could ever hope to fully cover in a conventional book.

Nailing It

I don't want to seem to pollyannish here.

As I mentioned earlier, my mood swings have been more sudden and more dramatic than they usually are. I was in one of those downward spirals in late April. The news was dismal. I didn't see many glimmers of hope. For humanity in general. For the United States. For my immediate community. For the people I work with at the Alliance for Peacebuilding and George Mason University' Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution. Or even for my immediate family.

And I'm an optimist.

Then, two things began pulling me out of the doldrums and started me on the journey that led to this paper.

Thank You Kelly Corrigan. First, I accidentally encountered Kerry Corrigan. On April 29, I was watching the PBS NewsHour. It had been a typical night of yet more depressing news. Then, Judy Woodruff introduced Corrigan whom I'd never heard of. In the three minutes and three hundred words of her segment, she talked about how we could nail the corona virus crisis.

She had been at her local supermarket and was stuck in line. She got more depressed and more annoyed until she did something she apparently often does when she gets that frustrated. She took a mental step backward and a deep breath and imagined what it would take for us to "nail" the pandemic. After I watched the three-minute segment, I immediately bought her most recent book, *Tell Me More* and started sharing the video with my friends.

Click the link and watch it yourself, and you'll see what I mean.

https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/a-humble-opinion-on-a-successful-post-pandemic-world

Since I'm sure you didn't catch every word amid the wonderful graphics, here's a transcript.

> *Sometimes, when I feel outmatched by the thing in front of me, I do a little mental exercise.*
>
> *I tell myself the story of what happened, as if it's over and I nailed it.*

This morning, I waited for 54 minutes to check out from the Safeway. The woman behind me, whose hair and makeup was perfect, had seven bottles of Martini & Rossi Vermouth. That's it.

And the guy in front of her had a full-face double ventilator gas mask.

And I felt outmatched by the thing in front of me.

So, right there, I told myself the story of the 2020 pandemic and how we nailed it.

My success fantasy went like this. At first, it was awful, nothing but bad news on top of bad news. But then we rose up. We made soups and stews for old people and dropped them off, so they felt included and secure and nourished.

We read books to children over the Internet. We stepped outside at the end of the day and played music and clapped, so that each of us knew we were not alone.

We sent pizzas and Chinese food to E.R.s to sustain both our hospitals and our restaurants. We called old friends and told them things we'd forgotten to say: I miss you. I still think of you. Remember that time?

We turned up, all of us, on our screens to keep businesses afloat. And in so doing, we're exposed to the more tender elements of our colleagues' lives. Pets and children were now, to our mutual benefit, in the frame.

People figured out they don't need fancy equipment to exercise. We stopped flying around and jumping in cars for no reason. Everyone planted things they could eat. We played cards with our families. We had long conversations.

We identified what kind of learning can be delivered online. We discovered that teaching is the most complex, high-impact profession known to man, and we started compensating our teachers fairly for their irreplaceable work.

Everyone voted after the coronavirus.

Kids who lived through the virus valued science above all. They became researchers and doctors, kicking off the greatest period of discovery and innovation the planet has ever seen.

We came, finally and forever, to appreciate the profound fact of our shared humanity and relish the full force of our love for one another.

Judy Woodruff ended the segment and the program in a way that drove Corrigan's point home for all of that night's viewers and especially for those like me who took her line about "nailing it" to heart.

Thank you, Kelly Corrigan.

And wouldn't it be wonderful if all of that came true?

Wouldn't it be wonderful because therein lies an embryonic version of the new paradigm. One could quibble with Corrigan's specifics—after all, she did only have three minutes. Still, it is not hard to imagine what a post-pandemic world would look like. It would not solve all public health and related problems, but we would have made huge and lasting progress toward doing so.

When that segment aired, George Floyd was still alive, and we were mostly thinking about the pandemic and its consequences. As a result, nailing it today has gotten a lot more complicated and a lot more difficult. Still, in Amy Zalman's terms, Corrigan is suggesting that we all tell ourselves new stories about how we nailed it, where "it" means the corona virus or systemic racism or world peace or whatever else you want to include.

I don't want to make it seem too simple, because we have a lifetime of hard work ahead of us—and that's if we're lucky.

What I do want you to see is that this first step is not rocket science—with all due respect to rocket scientists. Once we've done that, we can begin developing the more detailed strategies for getting "there."

We Can Only Choose How We Respond. A week or so after Corrigan was on the NewsHour, the summer edition of the *Oberlin Alumni Magazine* arrived and this cover stared out at me. I used Wendy Beth Hyman's words to begin this essay because they are powerful in their own right. Frankly, it was the way they appeared on its cover that made me stand up and take notice.

That issue of the magazine focused on how the college was reacting to the pandemic and included a selection of emails faculty members had sent their students. When she sent hers, students had just left for spring break, knowing only that they would not be returning to campus.

I'm sure that current Oberlin students found those emails helpful, consoling, and full of useful advice. But hers hit home for me, because it made me think about my own Oberlin days in ways that help.me see pathways forward toward a potential collective reaction to the events of 2020.

My generation did not get to choose to grow up in the 1950s and go to college during the longest period of growth in American history. We also did not choose to live in a country

with a then 350-year legacy of slavery. We did not elect the government that wanted to send our generation of young men to fight in Vietnam.

We only got to choose how we responded. For me, the lessons were clear. I went to Oberlin because it was the first college to admit African-Americans and its students had been active participants in the civil rights movement of my own high school years. When I arrived on campus, the role of young white radicals in the civil rights movement was ending, but I often jokingly describe myself as having majored in ending the war in Vietnam.

Fast forward fifty years, and Hyman is still right.

We control how we react.

Whether we are a twenty-two year old Oberlin senior or a seventy-two year old Oberlin alum.

Or whether you went to Oberlin or not.

Reality Tells Me What To Do Once Again--Build a Movement

As I suggested in *From Conflict Resolution to Peacebuilding*, we would need to build movements that built grassroots support, which is something I had called for since my Beyond War days because it, after all, called itself a movement. Now, however, I realized that the movement or movements should not be focused on peacebuilding itself. Instead, they should start with the specific issues of the day. Our job as peacebuilders would be to add perspectives and skills that could take those issue specific movements deeper into paradigms, underlying causes, and the like.

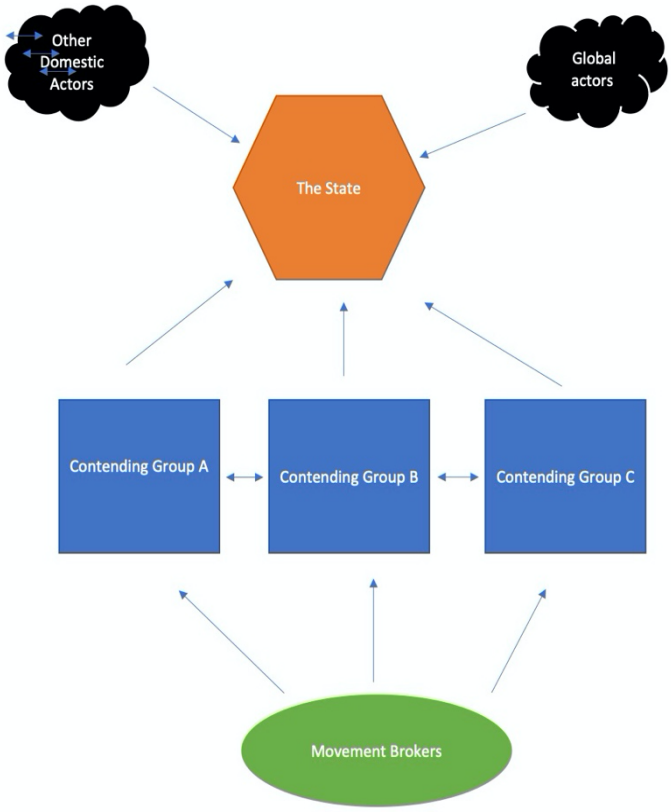
Therein lies the beginning of the pivot because it points us in the bold new direction I promised on p. 1. Making that case has to start with a detour. For reasons that have never been clear to me, my colleagues in peacebuilding and conflict resolution do not have a lot of experience with social movements.

Luckily, my next stop after Oberlin turned me into a scholar of social movements and exposed me to two very different perspectives on how they evolve that I've finally been able to combine in thinking about the best way to respond to this year's crises.

Charles Tilly and his legacy. During my sophomore year at Oberlin, I found my academic footing, becoming a serious and often obsessive student who focused on statistics, polling, and what would now be called political psychology. I ended up going to graduate school at Michigan because it was the "Tiffany's of social science research" as one of my professors delighted in calling it.

I expected that I would continue studying public opinion and apply what I knew to the movements I was a part of. It soon became clear that my goals did not mesh with those of the leading quantitative scholars who did research on public opinion and voting in the United States. I therefore started taking courses in comparative politics, found a conscientious objector job analyzing data for the professors doing a study on French

voting behavior, and, most importantly, started working with Charles Tilly, who was that generation's leading analyst of social movements.



He spent his entire career studying what he and Sidney Tarrow called contentious politics. Chuck was a remarkable human being, too, who had all of his graduate students over for dinner and an ad hoc seminar on social movements every Sunday night. We were an eclectic lot drawn from history, sociology, political science, anthropology, and even the occasional classicist. We were all drawn to him because we wanted to make sense of we had learned from our own experience in social movements using the research we were doing in various places and at various times.

Tilly was a historical sociologist whose own research focused on how movement contended for power in Europe from the mid-1700s until the mid-1900s. In his dozens of books and articles, Tilly identified a common trajectory which I've summarized in this diagram.

What he called contending groups normally began life as grass roots movements in a single town or mine or factory and then spread. Early in my time working with him, he sensed that I didn't get that, so he had me read Emile Zola's novel, *Germinal*, which recounts a spontaneous strike in a single mining town whose workers protested pretty much in isolation.

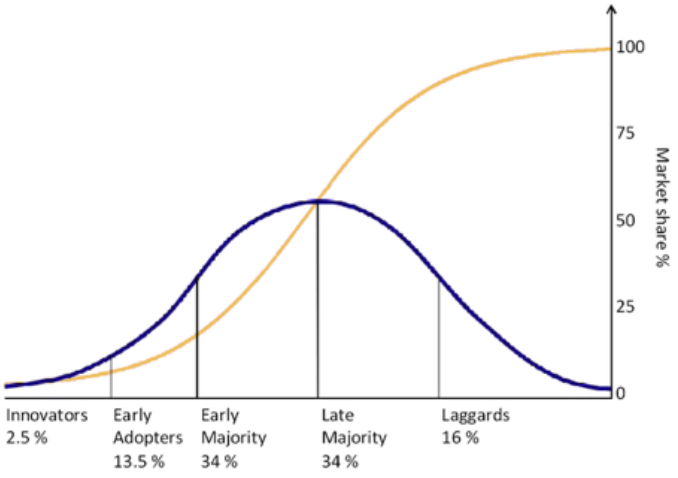
There were socialist organizers in the real world of nineteenth century France who had a lot in common with Zola's protagonist, Etienne Lantier. Lantier had grown up in the

mines but was able to see the bigger picture which led him to become what Tilly thought of as a movement broker who could fuse the anger and spontaneity in those local protests and turn them into a powerful force proactively demanding change from the state at the national level.

Tilly's data took him far beyond Zola's novels. In particular, he pointed out that the men (as they all were in those days) would not give up power easily. Contending groups would have to exert power over the state if they wanted to win and almost certainly would have to turn violent, at which point he and I began our life long tactical argument over the use of force!

However, anyone who followed the protest movements that began before the pandemic and then took off after George Floyd's death has to acknowledge that Tilly's analyses of movement building does have a lot to tell us about what has to happen next if we are going to pull off a paradigm shift. If, for example, we are going to force power holders to change in ways that go beyond virtue signaling, a more organized, national, and strategic movement will almost certainly have to be built. For that, in turn, to happen, the movement needed not only grass roots activists but organizers who had what we would today call network building skills.

We will need a lot more of those organizers moving forward. Although the tide may have begun to turn with the success of the march on Washington on August 28, individuals and organizers who can "connect the human dots" either face-to-face or on line are still in short sup ply. That should not come as a surprise given the suddenness with which events themselves unfolded. Still, it is clear that Tilly-style entrepreneurs will be needed in the months to come, especially since this generation's movements will have to bring people together around demands for change on a number of issues.



Everett Rogers and his legacy. I had an office down the hall from Everett Rogers during the two years when I was doing my conscientious objector service but didn't pay much attention to his work at the time. That was a mistake because his ideas were already at the heart of Beyond War's strategy when I started working with them a decade later/

Rogers did not think about social change which arose from insurgencies that focused on power. Instead, he actually made his way into the study of social change after public opinion and marketing experts realized that the adoption of any big new idea followed the kind of trajectory he first observed while doing research on how and why Iowa farmers decided to plant new varieties of corn. As was the case with the civil rights movement of the 1960s, public support for a dramatic new idea takes off

after opinion leaders who have the respect of open-minded citizens buy into it. Once those early adopters start coming on board, support for a movement can truly take off, often the same kind of speed with which we saw the pandemic spread in the first half of 2020.

Do not take the numbers in this chart literally (if you took statistics, you'll see that they reflect the distribution of cases at each standard deviation from the mean). Rogers' genius came in seeing that cultural norms do change and that they change following a fairly common trajectory.

He probably would have chosen different terms were he to develop the model today. Still, his logic makes sense. Much of what follows focuses on creating the preconditions for the inflection point that occurs after you begin reaching a fair number of early adopters who are also community leaders, however you choose to define community. As Malcolm Gladwell popularized it twenty years ago, once support for a movement or epidemic or anything else reaching a tipping point, it enters a period of exponential growth. Once *that* happens, the yellow curve deserves our attention, because by the time you've reached the middle of the purple one you, you already have half of the population on board.

Rogers' model is built around what was then a very different theory of change from Tilly's which helps explain why it has not gotten a lot of attention from social movement activists. Unlike what we had done in the 1960s (and which drew me to Tilly), Rogers's approach lent itself to an inside-out strategy that suggested first mobilizing certain members of the social mainstream.

To be honest, I resisted the idea when my friends at Beyond War suggested that we do things like work with our local Rotary Clubs because that is where many of the community opinion leaders were to be found. That morphed into a more general strategy of reaching out to teachers, doctors, social workers, and others who were themselves open minded and had the respect of people in that particular area. Today, of course, we would add internet influencers and online communities to that list.

Rogers's ideas have become relevant again today because public opinion has changed so dramatically in the first half of 2020. And not just on the specific issues. Cultural norms seem to be changing, too, in ways that might let us build support for change on the deeper or root causes that sustain systemic racism and the other dynamics that have suddenly made it onto center stage.

When you talk about those kinds of cultural changes, that's the stuff that paradigm shifts are made of. We never go from one paradigm to the next in one fell swoop. They tend to be partial and occur when lots of seemingly incremental changes accumulate and all of a sudden, you look back and notice that things really are different now.

That has happened time and time again in the past, most recently with the seemingly sudden acceptance of same sex marriage. To see what I mean, think back a mere fifty years. I had just graduated from college when Stonewall happened. Even many of my gay contemporaries were not aware of the protests when they happened.

Less than fifty years later, same sex marriage is the law of the land. When a gay man ran for president with his husband by his side, almost no one batted an eyelash. When a well known baseball announcer uttered an anti-gay slur, he was immediately taken off the air.

Those kinds of events were only possible because a Rogers-like diffusion of new ideas had taken place. That, by no means, suggests that the contentious politics of the last fifty years led by the LGBTQ community was not central to the story. Nor does it mean that the struggle for LGBTQ rights is anywhere close to over.

It does mean, however, that the kind of inside out strategy we derived from Everett Rogers's initial research on the adoption of new strands of seed corn (!) has some merit. Especially during times like these.

Non-neutral and non-polarizing. The use of force aside, I've never seen the Rogers and Tilly approaches as incompatible. Quite the opposite. The most successful movements of my lifetime have combined elements of both of them, sometimes wrapped up in a single individual.

My friends at Build Up^ have started describing this kind of movement as non-neutral but non-polarizing. The phrase may not be music to your ears. However, the two key phrases point us toward a way of blending Tilly's and Rogers's work in ways that I had not thought about before and, more importantly, continue defining the pivot we need to make.

To begin with, we cannot be neutral nor should we try to be. There are times when it does make sense for peacebuilders to be the third party neutrals. However, when the conflict hits close to home *and* peacebuilders themselves are parties to the dispute, any notion of neutrality flies out the window.

Furthermore, new phrases like being on the right side of history resonate with scholars of my generation who were activists during the 1960s before they studied with Tilly and others of his ilk. Like my much younger colleagues in organizations like Build Up^, I stand squarely for ending racism and sexism, combatting climate change, reducing economic inequality, and more.

That's where the non-polarizing half of their statement comes into play. Rather than hide our differences, they would have us treat them differently.

On one level, what follows is not new. William Ury of *Getting to Yes* fame has been talking about the many ways what he calls third siders can take a side in a dispute and do so in a constructive way. In his recent book *Dangerous Love*, BYU-Hawai'i professor and former ESPN analyst Chad Ford, refers to this as 'turning toward" the people we disagree with and inviting them to explore the conflict with us. It's what Beyond War meant what it emphasized maintaining a spirit of good will. Finally, it is what a handful of organizations like Training for Change do when they coach activists on how to make their case without alienating the other side.

If peacebuilders have learned anything, it is that when we use stereotypes and otherwise demonize the "other," we only deepen the chasm that divides us that divides us. From this perspective, protests can be important in lots of ways. They raise awareness. They allow participants to literally demonstrate their strong feelings. Sometimes, they even lead to policy change.

At the same time, we do have to be careful that they do not alienate people who are in the middle of the Rogers curve and could potentially become allies. We also have to be careful that protests do not polarize our society even farther and produce the kind of backlash that President Trump is clearly trying to foment as I write.

The trick is to find ways of stating one's position clearly and strongly while simultaneously inviting the people one disagrees to enter dialogues and other processes through which we might solve the problem(s) together.

Let me be clear. I'm not talking about simply holding discussions that cross ideological lines. I'm also not talking about starting with discussions with people who are either at the far right end of the Rogers curve or of the political spectrum like the Bougaloo Boiz. I am also not saying that everyone we turn toward will turn toward us as Ford so eloquently points out.

Let me clear, too, in stating the case that the costs of not finding ways of being non-neutral and non-polarizing are rising at a frightening rate. During the week when I wrote these words, two BLM activists and one Trump supporter were killed in Kenosha WI and Portland OR respectively. We have also seen to armed militias in the streets and even occuping the state houses in Michigan and Idaho. While the threat of armed violence seems to be coming primarily from the right, we have seen armed African-American protesters in Kentucky.

Even if you argue that there really isn't much violence, polarization is taking its toll on the way our democracy works—or doesn't work as the case may be. People in my tribe react with horror and disgust when conservative activists politicize wearing masks and social distancing. At the same time, we fail to hear the real grievances that the people who show up at those demonstrations have which have been so eloquently documented by New York Times reporters Nicholas Kristoff and James Tankersley in their recent books.

Let me be clear, finally, in stating that we almost certain still have some time before American democracy is in immanent danger. If so, strategically turning toward some of the people we disagree with can speed the adoption of new ideas and change cultural norms. Once that happens, we can think about taking a movement to scale in three critical ways, which is the major point I will turn to next.

The Peacebuilding *Pivot*

I also find myself returning to the seminar in California because we didn't learn the most important lesson reality had to teach us then. By the time we met in 1988, it was clear that the Cold War was ending. No one expected it to end so quickly or in the ways that it did. Nonetheless, it should have been clear to us that a movement that had based its appeals on fears of a nuclear war would have to change.

In the language of startup culture that my friends in Beyond War were part of in Silicon Valley, we knew we would have to pivot.

We didn't. When we finally tried to do so by creating the Foundation for Global Community, it sputtered for a few years until the leadership finally decided to close up shop, sell all of their assets (including the retreat center in Ben Lomond), and give away the money that they had left.

Fast forward thirty years.

Peacebuilding and conflict resolution are now established fields, and they are not likely to disappear the way Beyond War did. However, if 2020 has taught us anything, it is that we, too, need to pivot and add new ways of doing our work. As was the case with companies like Netflix, that doesn't mean giving up what you are already doing, but we have to adapt to the circumstances we find ourselves in, anticipate what might come next, and act accordingly.

We should be asking what peacebuilders could be doing differently. What is our equivalent of pivoting from renting videos in stores to mailing them out to subscribers and, then, to move from renting physical DVDs to becoming a streaming service?

Here, I got it partially right in *From Conflict Resolution to Peacebuilding*.

Emphasis on partially.

I spend the bulk of the next to last two chapters discussing the need for peacebuilding movements and discussed how they might unfold based on some initiatives that were just getting underway a year ago. Here, I want to make the case that we have to continue doing that work *but* that we also have to engage ourselves in different kinds of movements as well.

Peacebuilding Movements. I am delighted to say that I wrote about one movement and one loose network that focus explicitly on peacebuilding and are gaining traction.

+Peace was formed in 2018 by a coalition of the larger international peacebuilding NGOs and is housed at the Alliance for Peacebuilding. As of mid-August 2020, it had thirty-three partner organizations.

Like any ambitious movement, +Peace is trying to build support for its cause, in this case peacebuilding. To see where it is heading, consider its mission statement and overall strategy:

> *Peacebuilding is an essential tool for addressing today's interrelated crises of violence, war & polarisation. Peacebuilders are the people on the frontlines of this work every day. We are working to elevate public understanding, embrace & support for peacebuilding, while building a more formidable global social movement of peacebuilders.*

> *We seek impact at multiple levels. We seek to inspire individual and community awareness & change. We want policymakers and politicians to center peacebuilding in laws and policies. And we're working with the private sector to make the global economy support positive peace. We know that change at all three levels will be critical to reducing global levels of violence at the scale we need.*

+Peace has launched a number of campaigns. Some have been whimsical, including trying to convince dictionary publishers to include the word peacebuilding. That grew out of our annoyance with the fact that our word process put red squiggles under that word every time we typed it. Other campaigns aim to create more peaceful cities in the United States and Colombia. In 2019, over 100 events were held around the world during September's peace action week. An even more ambitious effort is planned for this year.

Before you object (correctly) that these efforts fall short of the goals I laid out earlier, keep one thing in mind. +Peace has exactly two full time staff members. Its member organizations still prioritize their own initiatives. In short, + Peace is a far cry from what we will see shortly with Imperative 21.

In June 2019, my editors at Rowman and Littlefield and I organized a conference of practitioners, including representatives from +Peace and several of its member organizations. We invited them because they all understood that we had to go beyond our normal constituencies if we wanted to close the gap in my third picture from Rondine, which I also used to open that conference.

We worked on the assumption that it was high time that we stopped approaching people with our preconceived peacebuilding agenda in mind. Instead, we explored how we could work people in the places where they already take their conflict. Sometimes, people mired in conflict do seek out their community mediation centers. More often than not, however, they go to their religious leaders, schools, social service offices, athletic teams, and even the local police. Because Rowman and Littlefield publishes in many of those areas as well as peace and conflict studies, we decided to find ways of reaching out to those other communities, where professionals were often doing work that looked a lot like conflict resolution and peacebuilding, whether they even knew about those terms or not.

We ended up deciding to prioritize K-12 education. Our efforts were derailed by the onset of the crises and by the fact that none of us could devote all of our time to the project. Nonetheless, as I write, the Alliance for Peacebuilding and New Gen Peacebuilders are about to launch a project that will dramatically expand the teaching of peacebuilding in high school history and social studies classes.

Put today's issues first. If your reaction to the last few paragraphs is something like "too little, too late," I couldn't agree with you more. In fact, this is one of the areas where I've personally changed the most since we held that conference and I finished that book for Rowman and Littlefield.

The events of 2020 have only convinced me that we should focus on building broader coalitions that prioritize the issues of the day because they showed me once and for all the masses of people are not going to jump on our bandwagon if we appeal to them with peacebuilding themes alone. Even before the pandemic, it was clear that frustration about our failure to make progress on specific substantive issues was fueling a new wave of activism, especially among young people. In my book, for example, I talked about the galvanizing impact the mass shooting at the Mary Stoneman Douglas High School and the Fridays for Future movement had in goading high school students into action.

Research Agenda/Organizing Agenda

I'm obviously laying out two agendas here.

The first is for the research I would have to do to turn this paper into a book. Doing so would mean fleshing this section with real world examples from a number of areas that I would explore in some depth.

But it also has an organizing agenda in which part of my job is to *actually do* at least some of what I call for the in the rest of this document. Obviously, I now that I can't do that alone.

I would love suggestions on both fronts.

Sooner rather than later, those movements will need peacebuilding and conflict resolution skills in ways that I will discuss in the next section. For now, I'm convinced that we have the best chance of producing the kind of cultural and behaviors shifts I mentioned earlier if we position ourselves on the right side of history by working as peacebuilders within those broader movements.

As I will also show in the rest of this paper, quite a lot of those movements already exist on issues involving race, climate change, guns, and gender. Here, however, let me limit myself here to two business initiatives that I've begun working with because they illustrate the breadth of these initiatives and probably haven't made it onto the radar screens of most people reading this. Although I am new to both Imperative 21 and Zebras Unite and both are new organizations themselves, I can see their potential more clearly.

Some of my peacebuilding colleagues are perplexed by my fascination with the business world as a source of innovations that we could incorporate into our own work. Here, too, my friends in Beyond War opened my eyes to the lessons we could learn from the innovative companies that many of them worked for and, in a few cases, founded.

Frankly, as a 1960s leftist who has dabbled with democratic socialism over the years, I was stunned by the fact that some of the corporate executives and business school professors I encountered were committed to systemic and structural change. Some of their ideas were more radical and transformative than those my peacebuilding colleagues proposed. Their work was securely anchored in systems and complexity theory. Many (though by no means all) of them were exploring new "flatter" ways of organizing their

business and had explored the personal implications of statements like "reality tells me what to do."

Perhaps most importantly of all, they have a far more optimistic mindset. At that same weekend, one of Beyond War's Silicon Valley entrepreneurs said something like this to me. "You leftists assume that you are going to lose. If I do that, my company will go bankrupt. I have to assume that I will win."

During the 2010s, some of those ideas began to coalesce around a number of organizations and a number of ideas. John Mackey, founder of Whole Foods, experimented with what he called conscious capitalism. He and others talked about the need for what they called stakeholder rather than shareholder capitalism in which a business should think about the long term, work cooperatively with everyone in its ecosystem (including its competitors), and run its affairs as if the long term future of the planet was important as its quarterly profit and loss statement. In 2013, a number of very senior executives like Paul Pohlman of Unilever and Richard Branson of the Virgin companies created the B Team of fellow current and former C-Suite officers who shared similar views.

In late 2019, the Ford and Skoll Foundations gave these and other stakeholder capitalism groups money to start Imperative 21. At first, its goal was to help convince their fellow business leaders that something like stakeholder capitalism was the only viable way forward for a world threatened by climate change.

Like everyone else, those plans were thrown for a loop in early 2020. Now, the Imperative 21 team has added public health, systemic racism, gender issues, and more to its agenda. Still it remains committed the same basic goals it started with not quite a year ago:

> *Imperative 21, a business-led cross-sector coalition that believes the imperative of the 21st century is to redesign our economic system so its purpose is to create value for all stakeholders.*

As of August 2020, its still evolving set of goals includes three main planks:

- Design for an interdependent world
- Invest for justice
- Provide value for all stakeholders

Its plans include a public launch in mid-September that will include a full page ad and an op-ed in major newspapers. It has developed powerful graphics that help people see what a socially conscious capitalism would look like. The team is also developing a strategy that Raj Aggarawal likens to a bow tie. The equivalent of the knot at the center are the corporate leaders it primarily wants to reach. The two bows represent tools that it will need to amplify whatever impact they have on the business leaders they target. On one side are the allies it tries to reach outside the business world, which is where people like me fit in. On the other side is more traditional advocacy work aimed at what I will call

scaling upward on p. 31, because they understand that stakeholder capitalism would actually be helped if a number of legislative changes were made, including those that drive companies toward maximining shareholder rather than everyone's income.

Zebras Unite has very similar values but approaches movement building from more of a bottom up perspective, a theme I will also return to frequently in the rest of this paper,. Formed in 2016 by four veterans from the journalism and the startup world, the organization has always stressed the value of zebras over unicorns.

The media often laud the unicorns or tech companies that quickly reach at least a billion dollars in value. To the Zebras Unite or Imperative 21 founders, many of them lost their ethical balance along the way. Instead, they decided to bring together founders and investors who wanted to create a different kind of economy for which the zebra would be a better animal role model.

As they like to point out, unlike unicorns, zebras are real animals. Especially when threatened, zebras survive by cooperating in what we humans refer to as dazzles, which has given Zebras United both a meme and a cute term to organize around. The fact that they are black and white also reflects the reality of life in the United States.

As this statement suggests, they share many of the same goals as Imperative 21

> *We blieve that developing alternative business models to the startup status quo has become a central moral challenge of our time. These alternative models will balance profit and purpose, champion democracy, and put a premium on sharing power and resources. Companies that create a more just and responsible society will hear, help, and heal the customers and communities they serve.*

Unlike Imperative 21 which is a coalition of existing organizations which will grow more or less from the top down, Zebras United has always seen itself as a grassroots movement that grows from the bottom up. When I joined in late August 2020, it had just reached 6,000 individual members around the world which it is turning into a socially beneficial network.

With support from the Omidyar Network, it is also transforming itself into a cooperative that can provide funding and other forms of support for zebra-like startups. Chapters are being set up in local communities, although there isn't one yet in the Washington DC area where I live.

What We Bring to the Table

By suggesting that we will have to work with Imperative21, Zebras Unite or any of the dozens of networks that focus on racial justice, that does *not* mean that we should abandon what peacebuilders already do. To begin with, organizations like +Peace have a very important role to play in their own right.

More importantly, as organizations like Imperative 21 and Zebras Unite begin to have an impact on the broader society and move farther and farther to the right on the Rogers curve, they will need the skills that peacebuilders and conflict resolution experts already

bring to the table. Movements working on more controversial issues will need us even more.

There is one simple reason why that is the case, which I've already heard dozens of times in discussions with people who concentrate on these other issues. We have some important skills that are often in short supply in these other organizations, whatever their focus.

If nothing else, the kinds of movements I've alluded to will encounter resistance if not outright opposition from those currently in power and their grassroots supporters. To that end, we should position ourselves so that they can add our skills to those that they already have. There is no need to delve into all of those skills here. It should be enough to focus on six of them that would add value to an organization like the two I just discussed as well as to others that are likely to engender far more resistance.

From empathy to building trust to reconciliation. If we have learned anything, it's that lasting peace has to rest on a firm attitudinal and emotional base where once there had been deep animosity and, usually, violence. Among other things, we have developed a series of tools that allow people to change the way they think about the "other" that can create, foster, and strengthen constructive relationships among one-time adversaries.

That starts with helping people develop a better sense of empathy so that they can best understand why those on the other side hold such seemingly unacceptable beliefs. While empathy alone is never enough, it does help people begin to develop trust in each other which never develops quickly or easily and rarely lasts unless the real world conditions that give rise to the dispute are addressed.

Once those values shift and the substantive problems are in the process of being solved, we can begin talking about reconciliation e. Again, that requires addressing the underlying problems, but it also involves overcoming the often deeply held and generations old feelings of oppression, abuse, and the trauma that comes with it.

Bottom up more than top down. In the last few years, peacebuilders have emphasized the importance of local or grassroots peacebuilding. During the 2010s, more and more of us came to the conclusion that outsiders should not lead peacebuilding efforts. We couldn't know local conditions as well as the people who lived there and experienced the conflict first-hand. Instead, our job should be one to "accompany" local peacebuilders who, themselves, called the shots. We could and should help because of what we had learned from our experiences around the world, but when all was said and done, it was their peace process, not ours.

That also has led us to emphasize bottom up initiatives in general. While there is obviously a place for +Peace or Imperative 21, our gut instincts now lead us to prioritize projects like Zebras Unite that emphasize what people are doing "organically" in their own physical or online communities.

Build on bright spots. We have also learned that there will be places where things work reasonably well, no matter how dire the overall situation might be.

As part of our deep dive into systems theory, we have also learned to search for those outlier cases that Chip and Dan Heath call bright spots, learn why they are different, and then try to replicate what happened so that we can shift more of the system as a whole by exerting what the organizational development expert, Peter Senge, refers to as leverage.

A single example should illustrate this pointShortly after the pandemic shut everything down, Monica Curca of Activate Labs approached the Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation with an intriguing idea. Couldn't we create an online space for peacebuilding activists and others to meet and share their worries and anything else during this period when we couldn't do our normal work? She put together the Hive as a weekly gathering in which people shared their art, poetry, and music, peacebuilders discussed their ideas, and we all gathered for an informal Honey Café (replete with an image of a coffee shop whose ceiling lights had honey bee shaped lampshades).

Then, George Floyd was killed and many of the "bees" found themselves on the streets. The Hive had to pivot and take on questions of racial justice, too.

By July, about thirty people from around the world showed up each week. Most were young (but not all, since my wife and I usually attended). Some were anti-racist activists. Some were peacebuilders. Some were just showed up after finding out about the Hive through word of mouth.

By August, it was clear that the original Hive was running out of steam and needed yet another pivot. Monica and her team had created a minimum viable product that had plenty of potential. But it lacked a few things. How could it reach communities other than young activists? Older people like me for whom slam poetry is not our artistic vehicle of choice? Or consertives? Or any other community we intentionally want to reach out to? Even more importantly, how could we help the "bees" add contructive ideas and plans for action to the anger and frustration most people brought to the Hive?

So, Monica and her team put the Hive on hiatus for a month. That would give them time to do a systematic evaluation of what it had accomplished and allow them to bring it back in a new format or formats through which it could have a bigger impact.

Consensus building. Some of us also have considerable experience working on divisive public policy issues. In that work in the United States and around the world, we have developed two main tools that should be useful in dealing with the problems of the post-pandemic world, whatever it ends up looking like.

First, William Ury, the co-author of *Getting to Yes*, which has long been the go-to book for newcomers to conflict resolution, has long argued that we do not have to be strict third party neutrals. Instead, we can take on any of the ten ways of being what he calls a third sider when find ourselves in the middle of a dispute in which we come down on one side more than the other--as is almost always the case in the American political disputes at the dawn of the 2020s. What all third side roles have in common is an emphasis on the values I described in the previous section. In this case, that means helping the people we work with not demonize the other side, treat them with dignity and respect, and act in the kinds

of ways that make what Chad Ford calls turning to the other and invite him or her to solve the problem with you.

Second, we also have some—though admittedly less—experience with what is referred to as consensus policy making. Trained facilitators work with interest group representatives from all sides over an extended period of time, usually working behind closed doors and away from television cameras. Consensus policy making uses empathy, trust-building, and the like to help policy makers find common ground which can then be fed back into the conventional policy making process.

When I was at Search for Common Ground in the tense aftermath of the 2000 presidential election, we came close to securing passage of an act that would have created the United States Consensus Council which would have had a status similar to that of the United States Institute of Peace and other federally funded but autonomous agencies. When that legislation failed to pass, the bulk of our team formed Convergence which has continued that work as a think tank separate from the United States government.

> *We convene people and groups with divergent views to build trust, identify solutions, and form alliances for action on critical national issues. Founded in 2009, we employ our proven methodology of dialogue-leading-to-action to find breakthrough solutions on critical national issues. We engage an extraordinary network of people—business leaders, policy advocates, community practitioners, elected officials, think-tank experts, academics, and community leaders—in moving forward. We empower unlikely alliances to create change at the local, state, and national levels.*

Using that model, Convergence currently is working on health care reform in California, programs for American workers, and improving the operations of Congress itself.

Just as important—but harder to describe with specific examples—is our ability to help the people we work with see the root causes of the problems they face. Here, two examples should be enough to see what I am driving at.

Reframing. Whether you read a classic like *Getting to Yes* or a newer book like *Dangerous Love*, you find that we tend to succeed when we help the parties to a dispute redefine or reframe the conflict. It is often hard to find common ground when adversaries are stuck in a rut or, as Fisher and Ury put it, they focus on rigidly defined positions rather than more general and flexible interests. In more recent work like Ford's stunning new book, that rigidity invariably has an emotional side to it that paralyzes both parties at least until one of them summons up the courage to see that there are creative options that open up when she or he takes a first step toward the "other."

All conflict resolution tools help the parties broaden the number of options available to them, some of which can lead to a win-win outcome that, in turn, could lead to longer term and deeper reconciliation. All, too, involve not simply reframing the dispute itself but putting the entire relationship in a new and broader light that opens the door to more creative and constructive options.

System and conflict mapping. During the 2010s, most peacebuilders I work with adopted some form of systems theory as an underpinning for both their analytical and practical work. That shift in our thinking is filled with implications for our work with colleagues who focus on single issues and rarely have had the need or the opportunity to think in these ways.

In particular, we often begin planning a peacebuilding project by having the people we are working with map the conflict. Indeed, I begin *From Conflict Resolution to Peacebuilding* by having readers get a big stack of sticky notes and a white board, start filling out the notes with facts about the dispute, and the arraying them on the board in a way that separates out the causes of the conflict, the way it manifests itself in people's lives, and its impact. As I add new concepts in the rest of the book, I keep having the readers return to the conflicts they considered on p. 1 and improve the simple picture they first drew.

As they do, they discover that most conflicts are complex phenomena. They have long histories and long lasting and wide-ranging effects. They also find themselves reframing the conflict by putting it into a much broader and deeper perspective. More often than not, they find that the conflicts the chose to explore look a lot like what I called wicked problems earlier in this paper.

Just like I do in a classroom, peacebuilders who work with climate change or race relations activists can use these kinds of tools to help them see the bigger picture that involves deeply embedded values and assumptions. Like my students, they would also see that the seemingly inflexible systems they are confronting can change, because any system can change. From there, it only takes one small step to get them thinking in terms of paradigm shifts.

Going to Scale

We have to do more than just create these movements. If we want to meet the challenges I tried to get at in those photographs from Rondine or Julia Roig has in mind when she talks about having a seat at the grown-ups' table, we will have to go to scale.

If we don't. we are likely to fall far short of the mark. You can make the case that we failed to produce the lasting changes we sought in the late 1960s and early 1970s because we could not keep building support for the movement toward the right end of the Rogers curve and/or could produce the kind of cultural shift evoked by the term paradigm shift.

At the time, few of us activists thought in those terms. If we thought about scaling at all, we used models like Tilly's that did not have much room for crafting strategies that could produce either new cultural norms in the wider society or wide-ranging policy changes at the local, state, or national levels.

Things are different today. The phrase going to scale has become an iconic buzzword in the startup community that just about every entrepreneur takes for granted—other than, perhaps, the Zebras. However, once you think about what going to scale means for the peacebuilding community or for the activists who have burst onto the political stage in

recent years, it involves a lot more than just making the zillions of dollars that can come when you successfully disrupt global markets.

To begin with, taking peacebuilding and other forms of social change to scale has three dimensions. Two of them get conflated in the startup mythology, while the third is often ignored altogether in ways that have led to some of the excesses we see among today's tech giants which the social change community has to avoid at all cost.

Upward. The first one comes closest to our stereotypical image of what the likes of Jeff Bezos, Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, or Bill Gates were trying to do early in their careers. We are not, of course, interested in capturing markets in online shopping, hardware, software, or social media. Rather, when we think of scaling upward, we have those sweeping changes in public policy in mind.

From the beginning, we have wanted to have an impact on the way public policy is made. Early on, we were out on the fringes of political life and could only dream of playing a major role in public policy making. But as the second image from Rondine suggests, we have made enough progress for us to have had occasional policy successes as with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations which included peacebuilding as a stated goal for the first time. Similarly, the Alliance for Peacebuilding and its members helped get the Global Fragility Act signed into law at the end of 2019, which commits the American government to help sustain the peace in the countries most at risk of falling into violence. Alas, scaling up in that way is not likely to happen until we do so in the other two other ways shown in the chart.

Outward. That starts with building support for social change as widely as possible. As has always been the case, that means developing networks of activists that covers the entire country. These days, the entire country is not simply defined geographically. We will also have to build support in virtual, online communities, something that has only grown in importance during the pandemic when many of us are stuck at home and have limited contact with people they live near or work with.

In an age of intersectionality, that also means building movements that work with each other across issue "silos." Doing so will accomplish two overlapping and vital things.

To begin with, it will help average citizens see that we somehow have to tackle these issues together. That, in turn, should make it easier for people to see that systematic racism or what my peacebuilding colleague Johan Galtung calls structural violence all have their roots in something akin to what Einstein had in mind when he said that "the unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking" in 1946.

In making that happen, we will have to "connect the dots" in two ways that we are just beginning to explore.

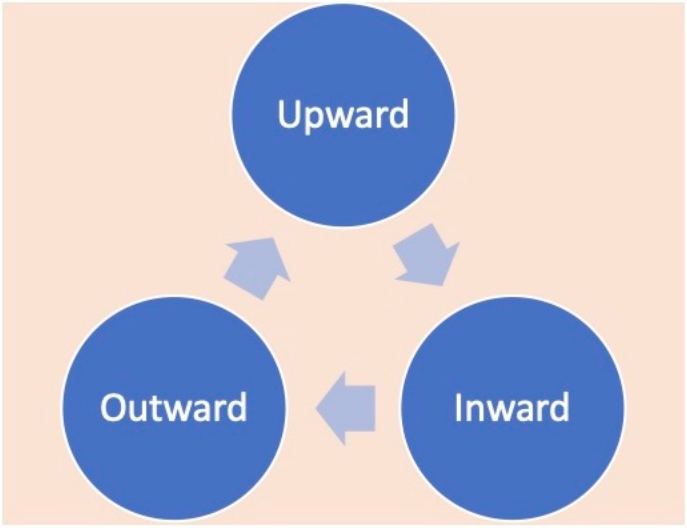
First, we will need analytical tools that will help us see where the overlaps that cross issues exists. Thus, while I was writing this, Princeton University launched its Bridging Divides Initiative which has mapped data on two sets of indicators. One covers protest incidents around the country. The other identifies organizations that are already working to bridge ideological divides. The really exciting thing is that we can overlay the two maps

and get a sense of where the real and potential hotspots are and identify people who are already working on the ground to do something about them. That will also allow national organizations like the National Center for Deliberation and Dialogue or the National Association for Community Mediation to figure out where they can best invest their scarce financial and human resources.

Second, we will need organizations that can actually build national and regional coalitions through which activists who work on single issues can combine their impact. Organizations like the Alliance for Peacebuilding and Imperative 21 are already doing something like that for their own communities. We will have to begin creating institutions that can figure out how to take their joint impact to scale.

Inward. At this point, scaling outward blends into the third category, which I've labeled scaling inward for lack of a better term. It is also the side of scaling that peacebuilders should currently be able to contribute the most to.

Some peacebuilders were drawn to the work as part and sometimes even as an outgrowth of their personal, inner explorations. In my day, that often meant a detour or more into eastern spirituality and at least a hefty dose of interpreting Myers-Briggs scores.



But today there is an even greater need for activists to look inside themselves and grow personally. Because of everything I've said so far, we are entering a "doctor heal thyself" period in which we have to learn to take our own advice in response to the crises of 2020 should be. As I did at the Beyond War seminar in 1988, I find myself needing to surface my own assumptions and emotions about implicit bias, agism, Donald Trump, and his supporters. We have to learn to be more self-aware, less judgmental, more empathetic, more proactive, and more open-minded when we deal with our adversaries.

That's a tough challenge, but one that we have to face. It's also something I learned early on in my career, first as a camp counselor and then, more importantly, as a young college professor. My campers and my students may not have had great study skills or been deeply curious about what I was teaching them, whether that was canoeing or comparative politics. But they did have very well developed and built in bullshit detectors. If my interpersonal style and the values I was spouting weren't in sync, they noticed. And then they tuned me out.

That proved to be even more the case when I started teaching courses in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the 1980s and discovered the Beyond War community. Then and now, reality has told me that my values and my actions had to be as consistent as possible.

If they weren't, I would lose my students.

Today, I risk losing the ability to reach people with whom I want to change the world. That risk is pronounced when I engage in virtue signaling or my work is seen as merely performative as is so often the case today.

And the stakes are much higher than they ever were in my classrooms. In my experience working with members of the military, conservatives, Evangelicals, and others who do not share my point of view, their BS detectors tend to be on high alert whenever someone like me enters the room. In other words, the more self-aware, empathetic, and non-judgmental I am, the more likely I am to get the "other" to take what I have to say seriously.

Especially the ones who don't agree with me to start off with but I know that I have to work. If we don't get better at that, there is little chance that that we can close the chasm even in my subdued version of the third photo from Rondine.

That is something peacebuilders are particularly good at.

Let me start with the example of Rondine, even if it isn't American. My wife and I did not go to there just to take those pictures, but to learn more about their work. Each fall, they bring about twenty recent university graduates from both sides of all conflicts. The students spend two years earning a master's degree, learning about reconciliation, and designing a project they will do together after their time in Tuscany comes to a close.

It's not just Rondine. Resetting the Table started out working on divisions within the American Jewish community. Since 2018, it has added other kinds of divided American communities, including rural areas whose divisions surfaced as a result of the 2016 presidential election. Whoever it works with, RTT asks its clients and its own facilitators to dig deeply into their personal paradigms by telling their own stories in ways that Amy Zalman would recognize. Such groups exist within other faith groups. Relational Wisdom 360 seeks to do the same thing with its clients, but uses Christian scripture rather than Jewish teachings. Perhaps most impressive of all is the Arbinger Institute whose deep roots in the Church of Latter Day Saints helps the people it works with escape the limits imposed by their personal paradigms.

These groups all have one thing in common. Their own staff practice what they preach. In my terms, they emphasize scaling inward.

But be cautious. This third dimension actually blends into a fourth. I haven't figured out how to include it in chart, but my artistic shortcomings should not keep you from seeing the importance of not focusing on going to scale too much.

As Zebras United will remind you, the startup world is filled with unicorns that lost their ethical way while amassing their first billion dollars. To see that point, all you have

to do is look at the negative press companies like Uber, WeWork, and Facebook have received.

In the business world, there is ample evidence that companies have taken too many shortcuts in order to get to scale as quickly as possible. We need to be wary of those shortcuts, too. That's, in part, why going to scale inward is so important. When done right, it provides everyone involved with a compass that leads them to think about the long term implications of actions that affect entire systems.

That does not necessarily rule out trying to go to scale rapidly. But, it does suggest being aware of the pitfalls you might face, especially since it is going to take a lot of time to build the kinds of movements I have been talking about—as you are about to see.

Pulling It All Together: A Really Ugly Diagram

I know that I've covered a lot of ground. In fact, a few of the people I presented early versions of this argument to said I really should try to summarize it all in a single chart so that they could react to it as critically and as effectively as possible.

So, I tried. The resulting diagram will help you understand why I almost failed the third and eighth grade because of my handwriting and artwork.

Please don't obsess with (or laugh too hard at) the diagram aesthetically. Instead, ask yourself two questions:

- Is what follows a good roadmap for determining how the conflict resolution and peacebuilding communities should react to the crises and set in motion a strategy for the months and years to come?
- To the degree that it is, what will we have to add to our current set of skills and tools if we want to achieve anything approaching a paradigm shift?

The kinds of movements I've been describing here will have to be built on five levels, only four of which I was able to depict using my rudimentary skills with the shapes feature of Microsoft Word. They will not unfold one after the other. Rather, we will probably have to work on all of them more or less simultaneously. In other words, think of this less as a snapshot of where we are now or where we hope to be twenty years from now. Instead, think of it as a freeze frame from a video that will unfold over a.long period of time, so long that it might resemble a soap opera whose plot line will play itself out over decades, which is the fifth level which I couldn't diagram.

Solve problems and peace will probably follow. This is the heart of the pivot. If I'm right, if we make significant progress in solving (m)any of the problems dividing our society, the rate of all forms of violence will decline and decline sharply. That will not happen automatically, and our peacebuilding skills will be needed during the transition. Still, without progress on race, inequality, policing, climate change, and more, we will not have much hope of building a peaceful society no matter how hard we peacebuilders try .

Expand the movement outward by emphasizing new cultural norms. Our cultural norms have already changed more than most skeptical analysts would like to believe.

Terms like win/win and even paradigm shift have entered our everyday conversation. We have not, however, gotten to the point where most people think in systemic terms, particularly in seeing how seemingly different social, economic, environmental, and other problems overlap and must be treated together as well as separately. As the discussion of systemic racism or the second and third order effects of the pandemic suggest, we are more open to seeing the world in terms of wicked problems, even if most people do not (yet) use that specific term—and may never need to. We do have to pay attention to more than the specific issues if we want to produce the kind of paradigm shift I have been working for since the 1980s. Here, too, the peacebuilder's instinct to dig deeper into root causes of problems will help us develop new cultural norms that apply across policy silos. And, as the social movement literature suggests, when core values change, it becomes easier to make the changes in public policy that help solve problems because the authorities realize that a growing proportion of the population is actually out ahead of them.

Emphasize bottom up rather than top down strategies. So far, I have largely ducked a central dilemma facing social movements. We know from reading novels like *Germinal* or from reading the research on local peacebuilding, that the impetus for change most often arises more or less spontaneously from the grass roots. Our job as outside peacebuilders ideally is simply to accompany local practitioners who understand the lay of the land far better than we ever will. At the same time, everyone from Etienne Lantier to the founders of +Peace and Imperative 21 understand that local activists are rarely very good at connecting the dots and taking movements to scale outwards and upwards. At this point, I have a good bit of uncertainty about all of this. I have spent most of my career writing about and being an activist in local initiatives. However, I've spent the last thirty years living and working in Washington and fifteen years working for what is essentially a top down organization.

Connecting lots of dots. Whether they work in peacebuilding or put some other set of issues +Peace and Imperative 21 have one feature in common that other such movements will have to share. The organizations themselves represent coalitions of like-mined groups whose leaders have realized that they can't reach all of their larger goals through their own business or NGO working on its own.

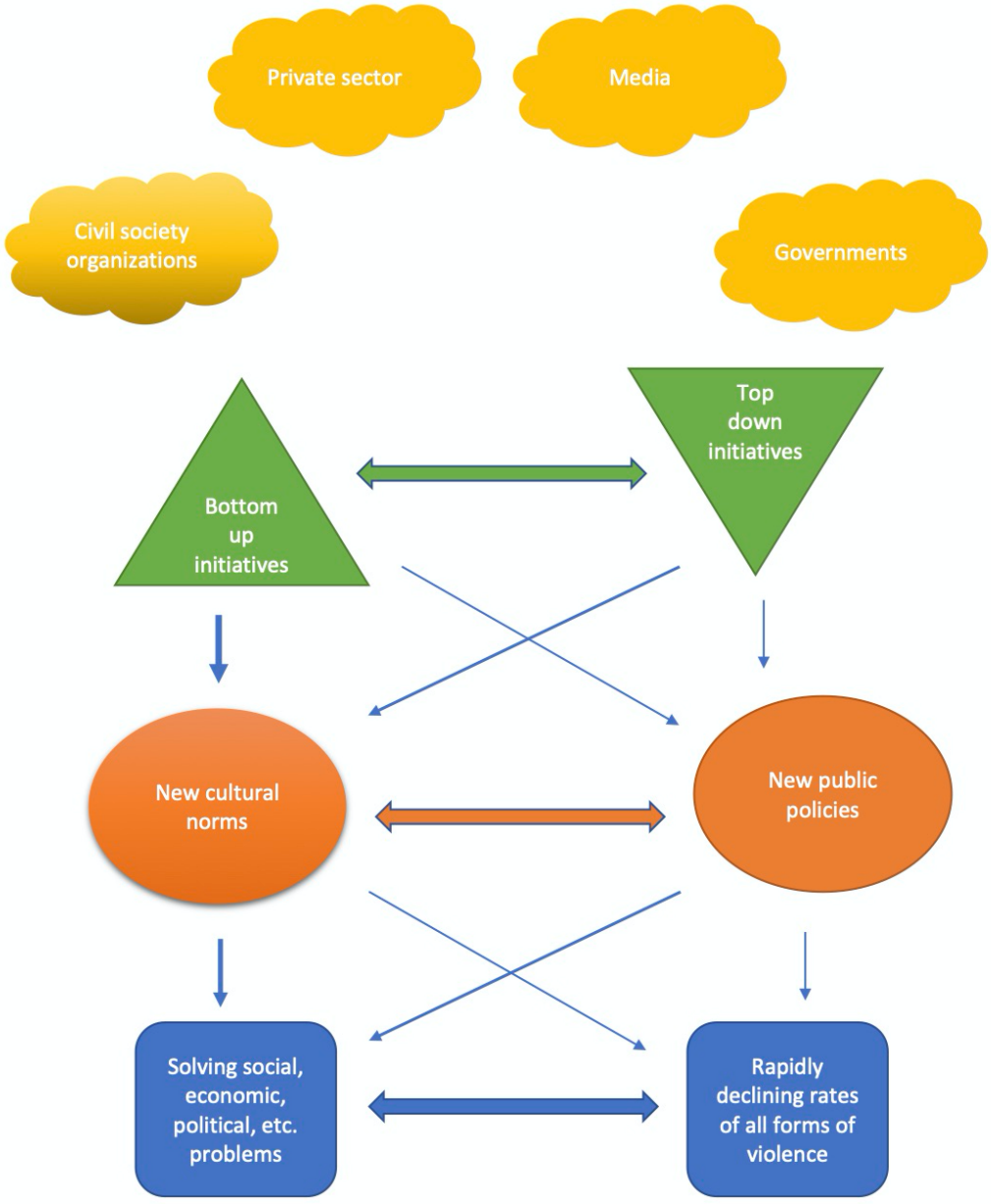
There are too many intellectual and political "dots" for any single organization to handle. In the peacebuilding space, Search for Common Ground excels at using television and radio while Peace Direct only works with local peacebuilders. Similarly, within the Imperative 21 coalition, Raj Aggarwal's PROVOC focuses on empowering organizations led by people of color and other underserved populations while Just Capital concentrates on changing the investment community and its priorities. In other words, these larger campaigns make it easier for organizations and leaders to bridge the silos each works in.

Sooner or later, the time will come when these kinds of organizations won't bridge enough silos and organizations like +Peace and Imperative 21 and others that don't yet exist will have to pool their efforts. Indeed, other than my own interest in innovations in

the private sector, that's why I've chosen to invest some of my time in Imperative 21 and Zebras United.

Build working relationships with partners who control the grown-ups' table. I'm obviously quite taken with Juilia Roig's notion of getting our permanent seat at the grown up's table. There are times when I still agree with Chuck Tilly that we will have to force our way and take our chairs away from men and women who have been there for far too long. More often, though, I'm convinced that we can gradually build working relationships with the powers that be, whether they are in government, the private sector, or the media. We can begin to build those partnerships at all levels on a gradual, issue-by-issue basis. Indeed, there are signs that some embryonic partnerships that could be leveraged into more profound change are already being forged. It is already having at the local and state levels in a handful of bright spots as with the project on high school curricula. We even win occasional victories at the national level as AfP and its partners did with the passage of the Global Fragility Act. Similarly, as the example of Imperative 21 suggests, not all key decision makers hold governmental office. Even before the coronavirus pandemic began, corporate leaders in the United States and elsewhere had already stepped into the breach to fill in the gap left by climate change deniers in the American and other governments. Along those same lines, some journalists had already begun rethinking their role on race, gender, and other issues as Amanda Ripley, for instance, pointed out in her own work on changing the media's narrative.

Know that it will take time. A lot of time. The most important thing to understand is that none of this will come quickly or easily. We have to make what amounts to a lifetime commitment. You don't have to be engaged 24/7. You can't be even if you want to. Very few of us will have or even want to have jobs that let us do this kind of work the way that I do. However, we all have a part to play. And therefore we all have to learn that there will be failures as well as successes along the way. We will all have emotional ups and downs which occasionally be as dramatic as the mood swings I've been through in first half of 2020.


Private sector
Media
Civil society organizations
Governments
Top down initiatives
Bottom up initiatives
New cultural norms
New public policies
Solving social, economic, political, etc. problems
Rapidly declining rates of all forms of violence

OK Boomer, Let's Talk

I want to end this paper with one final point that might not seem to fit until you remember why I decided to write it in the first place. It is no longer an update to the final two chapters of *From Conflict Resolution to Peaebuilding* that only has student readers as its intended audience.

I wrote those two chapters with the help of two remarkable undergraduates who helped me see everything from the importance of using the term intersectionality to the energy that their generation of activists bring to the table. That admiration has only grown in the last year, which led me toward a conclusion that only became crystal clear when I read Jill Filipovic's book, whose title begins this section.

We Only Get to Choose How We React

First, let me reiterate the most important point I made in the final chapter, which holds for each and every one of us, whatever our age or profession. Whether we want to or not, we will all encounter conflict every day for the rest of our lives. Like my student readers, most of my readers will not spend our professional lives in careers that have anything to do with peace and conflict studies.

However, we all will have to deal with conflict throughout the rest of their lives as citizens, workers, parents, neighbors, and more. I obviously had not encountered Wendy Beth Hyman's statement when I finished the book. I wish that I had, because the eight words I used as the title of this section pithily sums up what it took me most of a chapter to state.

It is very rare that one of my student readers—or any of us—will have much to do with creating the big crises of our lives. As she says, we didn't choose when we were born or the issues this generation of young (and older) people have to face.

That was true of my generation as well. Like today's young people, we only got to choose how we would react.

My generation of activists made a lot of progress on racial, gender, and environmental issues, some of which today's students are benefiting from—including the fact that many colleges and universities now offer courses and even degrees in peace and conflict studies. Some of what we have learned since then would have helped us at the time. More importantly, we have developed some tools that will better prepare today's students and others reading this paper for a lifetime in the long struggle for social change.

My study is filled with books that purport to tell us how to resolve conflict constructively and effectively. To return to the terms I used earlier, they all nail part of it--but not all of it.

In my own case, I still find the five commitments we asked new Beyond War activists to make as useful as any of them, especially when it comes to the conflicts that occur in the microcosms of our daily lives.

I will resolve conflict.
I will not use violence.
I will maintain a spirit of goodwill.
I will not preoccupy myself with an enemy
I will work together with others to create a world beyond war.

I would interpret them differently today with more of an emphasis on the non-neutral, non-polarizing side of things. Still, the underlying message holds today and can be applied whenever and wherever conflict occurs.

It starts with a commitment to resolving conflict. That comes with the assumption which we did not articulate at the time that it might not happen quickly. However you define the kind of work I've discussed so far, it can't succeed if it involves violence. I wold go so far as to argue (remember my verbal quarrels with Chuck Tilly) that it can't include non-physical violence of any kind, including the use of emotional threats. You can only get there if you avoid demonizing the people you disagree with which, in my case today, includes the current administration. You could and should disagree, but approaching them with a spirit of good will makes the kind of turning toward your adversary that Chad Ford writs about possible. Last but by no means least, the commitments carry with them the assumption that you can't do it alone and that you have to work together with others to accomplishing anything meaningful. None of us were familiar with the language of complexity science at the time. Had we been, we might have added the term emerging, because peace and the paradigm shift will not be born in one fell swoop and arrive on the scene full formed.

Those ideas made sense to me when I finished the book a year ago. They still make sense a year later. They make more sense now, because our world is even more polarized then it was then.

It's Time for a Generational Change

Finally, it is clear to me that it time for a new generation to take the lead not only in peacebuilding but in movements for social change in general. When I wrote, I had a specific audience in mind—undergraduates, almost all of whom would be under twenty-five. Now that I'm writing for a broader audience, I would use a broader definition of youth to include Gen-Zers and millennials.

If I've learned anything in the last six crazy months, it's that Millennials and Gen Zers have been on the front lines. It's not just Greta Tunbergs and others who get all the publicity. There are literally millions of young people who are responsible for creating the movements we've seen so far this year and have created more momentum for radical change than we've seen since I was there age a half century ago.

As we approach the sixtieth anniversary of his presidency, it is high time for us to take nine of the key words from his inaugural address to heart—"the torch has been passed to a new generation."

I do know that following the logic of local peacebuilding, we also have to give life to the 2020 version of words the President John F. Kennedy used in his inaugural address,

"the torch has been passed to a new generation." Today's young people are indeed leading the way on issue after issue and in community after community.

By the same logic that John Paul Lederach use in redefining our role as accompanying local peacebuilders, it's time for us to accompany young change agents. They understand the communities they live and work in far better than we more senior citizens do. More importantly, they will inherit a world which we have not stewarded very well during the course of our professional lives.

As I head into my seventies, it's the young people half a century younger than me who give me hope. Whether it's the students I help teach, my colleagues at the Alliance for Peacebuilding, or the young men and women I see on the news, they are doing powerful things.

A remarkable generation is coming of age today. Few of them are going to become peacebuilders 24/7. However, as I watched the demonstrations this spring, I was struck by how much more effective they could have been had the participants gone through nonviolence training or spent time with those of us who could have helped them define and articulate constructive alternatives to the status quo to go along with their justifiable anger—an anger I happen to share.

This Boomer Wants to Talk (and Listen)

While I was drafting this, I read Jill Filipovic's *O.K Boomer, It's Time to Talk*. It is a remarkably insightful look at the many misconceptions members of my generation has of the millennials of her age group and the even younger GenZers. I'm not in a position to assess the quality of the evidence behind her argument, which isn't germane here anyway.

In any event, I liked the title, because the conclusion I want my book's readers to take away is that they need to find their own place in the peacebuilding and conflict resolution world that has been a part of my life for decades. I also know that almost anyone reading this document as well as my book will almost certainly be younger than me.

So, at least this boomer is ready to talk. More importantly, I'm ready to listen.

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