



the business of good

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

AND THE

NEW BOTTOM LINE

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For Makayla, and the world that will be hers.

For Cory, and the world she has given me.

INTRODUCTION

and now for the good news

*It may be that when we no longer know what to do,
we have come to our real work
and when we no longer know which way to go,
we have begun our real journey.
The mind that is not baffled is not employed.
The impeded stream is the one that sings.*

—WENDELL BERRY

The most significant story of the 21st century has gone largely unreported. It gets told but only in bits and pieces. It's a hard story to tell, but what a story it is. It's the story of us—of how we've all been impacted by a higher level of social consciousness. Try selling newspapers with that headline. But it's real and it's changing everything. It has driven a hardly noticed, but hard to miss, zeitgeist shift within our culture. Zeitgeist defines the prevailing mood or spirit for a specific period of time. Some shifts are amorphous: We don't know where exactly they came from or how they came about. But that's not the case with this one. We know exactly how it came to be. In this book, I'll explain it and define it. It's called *The Great Convergence* and it's the driving force behind social entrepreneurship.

IRAN, A GOOD PLACE TO START

I'm sitting in a coffee shop on East 47th Street in New York City with Azadeh Tajdar, a social entrepreneur with an extensive track record initiating, leading, and scaling social ventures in frontier and emerging markets across the world. It's 10:30 A.M. on September 11th, 2015. Fourteen years to the day—almost to the very moment—when the north tower of the World Trade Center collapsed. We are meeting to discuss social entrepreneurship, whose growth has a lot to do with the aftermath of 9/11. We talk about technology, culture, Millennials, and the surprising commonalities between the youth of Iran and of the United States.

Our conversation turns to Iran, a subject she knows better than most. A member of the Iranian diaspora, Tajdar maintains close relationships inside the country. She was recently there and paints a picture of a place not so dissimilar from our own.

“Iran has an Iranian version of Uber. It has its own Groupon. It has an Iranian version of Amazon,” she tells me. At the University of Tehran there are hackathons, startup weekends, and incubators for entrepreneurs. But nothing is quite as exciting as social entrepreneurship in Iran. In Tehran—or Tehran Valley, as some call it—social entrepreneurs are working on a host of issues, from clean water to health care.

Tajdar teamed up with Leila Piran, a policy fellow at the School of International and Public Policy at George Mason University, to explore social entrepreneurship in Iran. “This is not something you read about in the West, but it is happening and it is very important,” she tells me. This was the first time academics sought to evaluate and understand the Iran’s social entrepreneurial market. Did one even exist?

According to their findings, there are between 50,000 and 75,000 active social entrepreneurs in Iran. In the first quarter of 2015 they worked with local partners on in Iran to distribute a survey in English and Persian. Field work, in-person interviews, and further studies were conducted in April. Eighty-three percent of them are engaged in an initiative, organization, or startup with a social, economic, or environmental objective. Sixty percent believe using technology will help them find more effective solutions to their challenges. And more than half of survey participants intended to make social entrepreneurship part of their job, either through a new venture or by incorporating it into their current work.

Iran’s social entrepreneurs have their share of obstacles to overcome. Red tape and a lack of regulation supporting their work rank among their challenges. In addition, the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) restrictions have eliminated foreign grant money, halted impact investment, and prevented the growth of exchange programs with Iran. The Iran nuclear deal will alleviate some restrictions, but it is not a panacea for the country’s social entrepreneurial community. Many hope the deal is the start of better days ahead.

The fact that social entrepreneurship is thriving in Iran should remove any doubt that the concept has gone global. It isn’t limited to Western developed nations and developing countries in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia. It is everywhere.

“The world is getting smaller,” Tajdar said. “That has created a higher level of social consciousness.”

In this book I’ve created a new prism for understanding the *why* behind The Great Convergence movement. We’ll peer into its

fundamentals, its founders, its funders, its foot soldiers, and its future. But first, let's look back for a moment to consider how much our culture has changed. There are always perils in making cultural conclusions. There will always be outliers. There will always be Kardashians.

THE MEDIA'S ROLE IN ALL THIS

The media is very good at reporting bad news. Film director Barry Levinson, who has commented on this phenomenon over the years, once told a group of graduates during a commencement address: "Let's use D-Day as an example. That was considered a shining hour where people sacrificed their lives for the liberation of Europe for democracy. Now, say television was there on the beach on D-Day. What would we report? Equipment broke down, soldiers were confused, some died by friendly fire, some couldn't reach their objective. What was wrong? Where were the mistakes? We would want investigations; we would want inquiries; we would recall General Eisenhower. Maybe he should be court-martialed?" The media is good at reporting conflict.

The media is very bad at reporting good news. "If it bleeds, it leads," the TV adage remains. That's tragic. Because of this mindset, we've missed one of the biggest stories of the 21st century: the rise of a powerful zeitgeist shift called The Great Convergence. It started slowly, but gained steam in the years after 9/11. If the media won't cover it, how do you tell the story of this historic shift?

A zeitgeist shift lacks the visuals of an uprising. So what we need is an uprising—no, make that two uprisings—one before our cultural shift and one after. If we could find two such events that happened at just the right time, then we could prove the theory of The Great Convergence.

Let me show you what I mean. Let's turn our attention back to Iran to better illustrate the world before and after The Great Convergence.

JULY 9, 1999

In the summer of 1999, students at Tehran University took to the streets in a peaceful protest. Such action in Iran was unheard of since

the 1979 revolution. However, the students were stirred to anger. The day before, the government had shut down *Salam*, a reformist newspaper.

Today it's hard to imagine students rising up to preserve a newspaper. But in 1999, before social media, and in a country with little Internet access, this paper was all the Iranian students had.

The Iranian government struck back with brute force following the protests, beating hundreds of students and killing one. This set off five days of rioting in Tehran, mostly by young people.

"It was wild and sudden," one eyewitness recalled. Beds and personal items were set aflame or thrown from windows. The students called on people around the world for help. Their pleas fell on deaf ears. The Dow Jones Industrial Average had recently crossed 11,000 for the first time in history, and the Iranian uprising did nothing to benefit anyone's portfolio. Nobody cared about citizens whose lives were so far removed from their own.

The one exception was the *Economist*, which featured the uprising on its July 17, 1999, cover. Under the headline "Iran's Next Revolution?" it featured a 21-year-old protester named Ahmad Batebi holding up a blood-soaked shirt. The photo did not go viral (this was not possible in 1999), but it did nearly cost Batebi his life.

ORDER IS RESTORED AND THE WORLD CONTINUES TO TURN

A few days after the beginning of the "revolution" order was restored, the protest leaders were jailed, and new laws were enacted to ensure that similar protests would not occur again.

The international response to the Iranian student protests was mild. The usual voices of condemnation came from world leaders. Individual citizens read about it (if they read more than just the front page, since it appeared on page A3 of *The New York Times*) and did little else. Frankly, there was nothing else for them to do.

It was also a busy news cycle. The day after the protests began, U.S. soccer player Brandi Chastain scored the winning goal to deliver

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the FIFA Women's World Cup to the Americans and celebrated by ripping off her jersey (this *did* make the front page of *The New York Times*).

JUNE 12, 2009

Ten years later, Iranian students took to the streets again, only this time they found the international response to be anything but muted. In 2009, the world was a very different place. People cared and took action using new tools.

On June 12, 2009, the American media was focused on the H1N1 flu. The strain had been declared a global pandemic. Americans awoke to newspaper headlines declaring the health hazards of this potentially lethal flu. A smaller story revolved around the presidential elections in Iran. Most Americans had not spent much time following the campaign, even though Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the anti-Western incumbent, was trailing in independent polls behind a reform candidate, Mir-Hossein Mousavi.

In the days leading up to the election, Iran's ruling regime became nervous. The government pulled the plug on Facebook access. At the time, Mousavi's Facebook page had more than 5,000 followers, which, for 2009 Iran, was significant. The Mousavi campaign used Facebook to spread its message beyond Iran's borders, as it quickly realized the election outcome may evolve into a larger struggle. "We are using new technologies because they have the capacity to be multiplied by people themselves who can forward Bluetooth, emails, and text messages and invite more supporters on Facebook," Behzad Mortazavi, head of Mousavi's campaign committee, told the *Financial Times*.

The Role of Twitter

Facebook was only a small part of what was to come. Twitter played an even bigger role.

Whatever happens today, Iran can never go back. You can't put this genie back in the bottle. #iranelections June 12, 2009 11:23 P.M. GMT (oxfordgirl)

Several hours after the polls closed, Iran's election authority declared Ahmadinejad the winner in a landslide. But the results made no sense. At some poll sites, more people voted than were registered to vote. The number of votes cast exceeded the number of eligible voters in about 50 cities, and 200 poll sites had a turnout of more than 95 percent. It soon became clear that the fix was in. An Interior Ministry employee later told *The New York Times* that "the government had been preparing its fraud for weeks, purging anyone of doubtful loyalty and importing pliable staff members from around the country."

Mousavi has called emergency press conference to dispute IRNA claims of Ahmadinejad victory. 11 P.M.: Africa Street/ Taheri; No. 76, Suite #1 2:50 P.M. June 12 (TehranBureau)

At this point, the media reported the story, but it seemed to have little traction. This revolt was about to go the way of the 1999 version. Only it didn't go that way. Word of an uprising spread on social media networks.

Ahmadinejad & his supporters will celebrate their victory today at 5pm local time in Valiasr square & we will try to ruin his party! 9:07 P.M. June 13 (Change_for_Iran)

ALL Internet & mobile networks are cut. We ask everyone in Tehran to go onto their rooftops and shout ALAHO AKBAR in protest #IranElection 2:44 P.M. June 13 (mousavi1388)

When the youth turned out in the streets to protest, the Iranian response was similar to the one in 1999. The Basij (local militia fiercely loyal to the Ayatollah) turned out to beat the students into submission. The plug was pulled on SMS messaging so students would be unable to organize.

But this time the protestors had two new allies. First, they had new ways to disperse their message. Just as important, they had an audience. Consider that for a moment. Even the best technology tools could not have powered the protest, dubbed the Green Movement, alone. The protestors needed people on the outside to receive the message, and

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to care about it. Now, even to their surprise, they had it. According to communications expert Clay Shirky, “Even if it’s just retweeting, you’re aiding the goal that dissidents have always sought: The awareness that the outside world is paying attention is really valuable.”

Students & people fighting back a large group of police & Basij right now at university of physics! I’m going to join them. #iranelection 11:34 A.M. June 14 (Change_for_Iran)

2am and people still on roof shouting death to Khamenei. a week ago that was unthinkable. people very fed up. want freedom. #iranelection 4:37 P.M. June 14 (persiankiwi)

In America, there was a visceral reaction to the events in Iran. Users weren’t passively absorbing information; instead, they were becoming part of the story.

When CNN failed to provide detailed coverage of the protests, a hashtag called #CNNfail was started. Users in the Twitterverse slammed CNN with a barrage of negative comments. “Hours after Iranian police began clashing with tens of thousands of people in the street,” ReadWriteWeb wrote during that chaotic weekend, “the top story on CNN.com remains people’s confusion about the switch from analog TV signals.”

See #iranelection for deets. Short story: election went bad. Iran went to hell. Media went to bed. Ergo #CNNfail (ayse_london)

On June 15, Twitter planned to shut down temporarily for a scheduled maintenance. Just how important had the service become to the situation? The U.S. State Department formally requested the maintenance be delayed to keep information flowing into and out of Iran.

@twitter Twitter is currently our ONLY way to communicate overnight news in Iran, PLEASE do not take it down. #iranelection 6:06 P.M. June 15 (mousavi1388)

Individuals also pressed Twitter to stay online. After brief contemplation, the service acquiesced, and users took great satisfaction

in helping preserve the communications lifeline for Iranians. With the situation in Iran quickly descending into chaos, users inside the country made sure the information got out.

I am not sure if students killed in tehran uni dorm. unconfirmed that there was shooting heard were attacked in streets by mob on motorbikes with batons—firing guns into air—streetfires all over town—roads closed.
#Iraelection 2:32 P.M. June 15 (persiankiwi)

Bassej are out in force in darkness. this is when they operate best. Streets are dangerous now for young people.
#Iraelection 11:29 A.M. June 15 (persiankiwi)

The Role of Facebook

Twitter wasn't the only social media service with an active user base assisting those in Iran. On Facebook, dozens of groups cropped up in support of the opposition. Dispatches from The Associated Press were given as much importance as reports on social media. Word spread from group to group, user to user.

My brother and I sprang into action as well. Using our vendor contacts, we quickly created and produced a 100 percent eco-friendly wristband embossed with the words "Where's My Vote?" The wristband was the same color green as the Iranian flag. To market the product, we created a "Where's My Vote?" Facebook group that soon swelled to 1,000 members.

We took orders from around the world, and after a few days had sold several hundred wristbands. I reached a deal with the Peacejam Foundation to donate all profits from the venture.

Of the 1,000 members in our group, almost all were under 30 years old. Many had never been involved in protesting a disputed election. Yet they had this incredible, passionate desire to help the opposition movement—a movement many of them didn't even know existed just days before they joined this group. They were so empowered, I felt as if they believed they could will the change to happen themselves.

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Shahrzad “Shar” Jarvid, a vibrant Millennial, connected with our group on Facebook. Prior to the 1979 revolution, Jarvid’s family led a privileged life in Iran, but they lost everything and were forced to flee when Khomeini came to power. Her family watched the 1999 student uprising on TV. In 2009, Jarvid didn’t just watch events unfold, she took action, organizing rallies in Louisville, Kentucky.

“It felt good to be a part of putting Louisville on the map in supporting those fighting for freedom, peace, and democracy,” Jarvid told me during an interview. “I’m a firm believer that every little bit helps, and it was interesting and heartwarming to have such a common interest with strangers, bringing people closer together.”

Jarvid experienced the culture shift that has occurred since the 1990s. “I really feel like after 9/11, people, especially younger people, began voicing their opinions more and rallies began to run more rampant,” she said. “After 9/11, people of all ages saw the impact of what such a tragedy had on people of every race, religion, age, and creed, and it lit a fire in so many of us to speak out and rally. It’s amazing how different people reacted to the situation in Iran in 1999 versus now.”

For the other members of our Facebook group, the “Where’s My Vote?” page proved extremely important. Users from inside Iran sent messages to our members.

We were in the streets near the place of Friday pray and they shot (sic) pepper and tear gas. but we didnt run away. we scream: GOD IS GREAT.

Our members responded to this, offering encouragement and promising to do whatever they could to help.

On June 17, the Iranian national soccer team was in a World Cup qualifying match. Several players defied the government and wore green wristbands in support of the opposition movement. Such defiance was unheard of in Iran, and it did not go unnoticed.

Football team protest was a big gesture as it took the message to every village in every corner Iran #Irenelection #Irenelections #Iran #gr88 6:08 A.M. June 18 (oxfordgirl)

Ten years ago, a U.S. soccer player tearing off her shirt in celebration was of greater interest to Americans than a student uprising in Iran. Now, the image of Iranian soccer players defying their government was the most shared photo of the day in America. That tells you something.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Even with a changed culture using new technology tools, old habits remain hard to break. Attention spans are still impossibly short. During those days in June 2009, the Green Movement seemed to get bigger and bigger. And then, as fast as you could say “thriller,” it all faded into the background. It took the death of the most famous entertainer on the planet to shift attention elsewhere. “Many say that it was so unfortunate because Michael Jackson died,” Tajdar said to me. “Momentum was building, people were talking about this electoral fraud, people were paying attention, and then he died.”

Notwithstanding the King of Pop’s demise, pop culture had undergone a metamorphosis. Emerging from the cocoon was social entrepreneurship. Its wings spread wide; it touched everyone from financial powerhouses like Goldman Sachs to nascent startups and nonprofits. It birthed a new era of problem solving that relied on the Business of Good. Make no mistake about it, problem solving can be a business. But business alone can’t solve all the problems we face.

That’s why nonprofits are extraordinarily important. Social entrepreneurs have disrupted the for-profit and nonprofit sectors by creating new business models for both. “Social enterprises apply business principles and tools to achieve social change, testing the age-old conceptual divide between profit and charity,” Katherine Milligan of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship wrote in a paper on how the nature of investing is changing.

Over the past 15 years social entrepreneurship has grown at an astonishing pace. It has done so because of this zeitgeist shift called

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The Great Convergence. It is the fuel that has ignited its leap from the fringe to the mainstream. It's changing the lives of those in the developing world and in the developed world. It's changing how we give. It's changing how we invest. It's changing who we are.

Welcome to *The Business of Good*.



the great convergence

Let's talk about the real world for a moment. I guess this is as good a time as any. I don't really know how to put this, so I'll be blunt. We broke it. . . . Somewhere between the gold rush or easy internet profits and the arrogant sense of endless empire, we heard kind of a pinging noise, and uh, then, the damn thing just died on us.

— JON STEWART, AT A COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

It all began with such fanfare. The biggest millennium celebration in history was about to begin. And why not celebrate? In the entire course of human history perhaps no other moment was filled with such peace and prosperity. At the close of 1999, there was much to toast. It was the crowning moment of a golden era consumed with Making Money Now.

August 9, 1995. This may have been the day the music died for Jerry Garcia fans, but it also marked the beginning of the Making Money Now phenomenon. The dotcom era was ushered into being when the morning bell rang at the New York Stock Exchange.

On this steamy summer day a new company was going public. This wasn't just any company, however. In 1995, the internet was a lot like the Wild, Wild West. There was little organization, regulation, or order. Then along came Netscape and its Internet browser, Netscape Navigator.

At the time, the internet wasn't a big deal. Worldwide, only about 16 million people used it. But despite the internet's relative obscurity, Wall Street traders saw something in this nascent technology. Netscape initially priced its offering at \$14 per share. Shortly before the IPO was released, however, surging demand persuaded the company to boost the opening price to \$28 per share. During a frenetic day of trading, Netscape shares soared to \$75 per share before closing at \$56.

And that's how the dotcom bubble began. By 1999, many Americans had attained a staggering amount of wealth. Some \$10 trillion of net worth was injected into the economy. That's enough money to buy every single person on the planet a Big Mac, soda, and fries for more than a year.

Even the federal government enjoyed the largess that came from Making Money Now. In May 1997, President Bill Clinton announced a bipartisan deal that led to a balanced budget (in 2015 the deficit would reach \$463 billion). It was an exciting moment for the country. I was on hand that day, as an intern assigned to drive a car in the presidential motorcade. I got to meet with President Clinton and congratulate him on the achievement.

During the late '90s, if you weren't making it big, it was a badge of shame. In the summer of 1999, *Newsweek's* cover declared, "The Whine of '99: Everyone's Getting Rich but Me." You didn't hear hardscrabble tales of how difficult it was to make money; this was an era when making money was easy.

Where were the voices of sanity? As *Newsweek* put it, "The strange thing is that nobody's really countering the money hype. In previous boom times in the 1800s and earlier this century, there was always influential criticism of such behavior coming from pulpits, schools, and colleges. Now it seems as if the list of deadly sins has been shortened to six."

Making Money Now became a cottage industry. Suze Orman released a best-selling book titled *The Courage to Be Rich*. Jonathan Hoenig delivered a personal finance book for those in their 20s and 30s called *Greed Is Good*.

One psychologist at UC Berkeley keenly observed: "People used to apologetically make money. Now you apologetically don't make money."

"It's the first time in the postwar era that so many people seem to be getting so rich with so little relative effort on their part. At least on the surface, it appears that the old work ethic has turned upside down," lamented former labor secretary Robert Reich. But no one paid attention to the naysayers. There was just too much money to be made. There was agreement on Reich's central point: It really wasn't that hard to strike it rich.

THE BALL DROPS

On New Year's Eve at the close of the millennium, the U.S. unemployment rate stood at 4.1 percent. The stock market ended trading on December 31, 1999, at an all-time high. Champagne producers couldn't keep up with demand as the millennium drew to a close. By almost every economic barometer, the country was wealthier than at any time in its history.

American strength was projected not only by our economy, but also by our dominance on the world stage. By the turn of the century,

the Cold War was long gone; America had no geopolitical or economic rival. Instead we had reached, some speculated, the end of history, and our future would be shaped by events smaller in scale and consequence than the Herculean struggles to defeat Nazism and Communism that dominated the 20th century.

In the run-up to the millennium the Israelis and Palestinians signed not one, not two, but three agreements that brought the prospect of peace in the Middle East tantalizingly close.

The U.S. normalized relations with Vietnam and expanded trade with China. In July 1995, the once unthinkable commenced in Russia: the Russian Trading System. Yes, even Russia had a stock market. It, too, caught the Making Money Now bug. The world was indeed a different place.

Making Money Now became an unstoppable force. It seemed nothing would halt its ascent. But on the evening of December 31, 1999, a different kind of bug posed a mortal threat to the euphoric times. It wasn't totalitarianism. It wasn't terrorism. Instead, it was technology.

The Y2K computer bug stoked worries of a coming Armageddon. To save memory, early computer programmers used two digits to denote the year (84) instead of all four digits (1984). There was genuine fear that computer systems around the world would go haywire, calculating the date as 1900, not 2000, when the century turned.

The public and private sectors spent more than \$300 billion worldwide to fix computer systems ahead of the rollover to "2000." In Chicago officials estimated that the city needed to collect bridge tolls from 36 million vehicles just to pay for Y2K costs. Large corporations spent hundreds of millions to inoculate themselves from danger.

The U.S. and Russia set up a joint task force to ensure computer systems didn't misread the new date as an indication of an attack. The task force met for drills and stayed in near constant contact at the end of 1999.

On December 31st, as the world waited nervously for confirmation that no missiles had been launched, other news out of Russia was largely ignored amid the celebratory cacophony of the new millennium. Late that evening Russian President Boris Yeltsin announced he was

resigning from office. The first peaceful transition of the Russian Federation would commence with a complete unknown assuming control. On the evening Vladimir Putin took power, the attention of the world was, with good reason, elsewhere.

As the final seconds counted down at the end of the 20th century, the dream of a peaceful and prosperous future seemed real and within reach. The only worry was with our technology.

Little did we know, we had it all backwards.

The moment arrived in a cascade of events around the globe. The new millennium first came to the small island in Oceania called Kiribati. A simple event with traditional dancing and a torch-passing ceremony marked the occasion. For the rest of the world, it was a more pyrotechnic affair. Millions jammed Times Square, the streets of Paris, Sydney Harbour. In Las Vegas they celebrated the new millennium not once, but twice (at midnight eastern time and then at midnight local time). ABC News anchor Peter Jennings spent 23 hours and 10 minutes on the air to cover this historic event.

The night was also remembered for what did not happen. There was no nuclear missile launch, and no doomsday scenario unfolded. That isn't to say Y2K was a complete dud. In Delaware, 150 slot machines at a racetrack failed to work, while the website for the U.S. Naval Observatory announced the date as 1 January 19100. Civilization would not come to an end on this evening.

And that's where the good news just about ended. Soon after the celebration receded, so, too, did many of the reasons we had to celebrate.

THE HANGOVER OF THE MILLENNIUM

The hope of the '90s was soon replaced with something else. The next decade was bookended by a recession at its opening and another, even larger one, near its close. And between the crashes the news wasn't all that good either.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, Wall Street was set to open its trading session with the Dow Jones at 9,605. Eight years later, on September 11, 2009, the Dow Jones closed trading that day at the

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exact same number, 9,605. While at first glance the numbers might suggest the years between were benign, as we all know they were anything but placid.

It was a decade of cascading catastrophes. 9/11 changed everything. Katrina flooded New Orleans. The Janjaweed turned Darfur into a killing field. Global warming transformed the North Pole into a seasonal shipping lane. Iraq turned into an insurgency. Afghanistan lived up to its reputation as a graveyard to foreign empires. Homeowners prayed for a short sale, hoping to avoid foreclosure.

On December 31, 2009, the stock market closed 1,000 points lower than it had a decade before. First billions, then trillions of net worth vanished. Unemployment hovered at nearly 10 percent.

From 2000 to 2009, there were 13 wars, 21 civil and guerrilla conflicts, five coup d'états, and terror attacks in New York City; Washington, DC; Shanksville, Pennsylvania; London; Glasgow; Istanbul; Madrid; Mumbai; and Bali. More than 1 million casualties arose from these conflicts, with civilians constituting the vast majority. And those were just the events caused by man.

Mother Nature showed us little quarter.

Climate change reared itself in ways that felt apocalyptic, if not biblical. More than 700,000 people would fall victim to a never-ending cascade of natural disasters ranging from hurricanes, tropical cyclones, and earthquakes to heat waves, polar vortices, and tsunamis.

To say things were bad would be an understatement. When the decade mercifully came to a close, no one knew what to call it. Was it the “aughts,” the “double-00s,” or the “ohs”? No one was really sure. Most just wanted to move on and forget it ever happened.

In the years that followed the first decade of the new millennium, world problems got bigger and bigger.

But at the same time, something magical was happening.

WEB 2.0

At first it was called Web 2.0. The concept emerged in the post-mortem of the 2000 dotcom crash. In the internet's first incarnation,

users were browsers of content. With Web 2.0, users became creators of that content. This profound shift led to the birth of social media and with it the modern internet we know today.

With breathtaking speed new sites attracted millions of users. Social media completely transformed our culture in ways we are only now beginning to fully understand.

By 2007, social networking had achieved a major milestone: It was the most popular online activity in the United States. Even pornography was no match for social media.

The speed of social media's growth is nothing short of astounding. It took radio 38 years to reach an audience of 50 million. TV accomplished this feat in 13 years. The internet did it in four years. In 2013 alone, Facebook added more than 200 million users. In 2015, more than 1 billion people were logged in—at the same time.

Recently I attended an alumni event for George Washington University, my alma mater. I asked a friend of mine if she was going to go. She had no interest. “I have a reunion every day on Facebook, and that’s with the people I want to stay in touch with,” she responded. I suggested maybe some of them would be at this event, but I was quickly shot down. “No,” I was told. “If that was the case, they would have posted it on their status updates.”

Social media has enabled a level of interconnectivity never before possible. This interconnectedness has made the world smaller and smaller.

During Labor Day weekend in 2014, President Obama commented on the collision between a troubled world and a smaller one. It had been a rough summer for the president and for world stability. Russia annexed Crimea and supported the separatist movement in Ukraine. ISIS captured Mosul, seized oil fields and banks, and slaughtered thousands of civilians while declaring a new caliphate. An Ebola outbreak in Africa reached pandemic levels with no containment in sight.

The president told a group of supporters: “The truth of the matter is that the world has always been messy. In part, we’re just noticing now because of social media and our capacity to see in intimate detail the hardships that people are going through.” Obama also noted that

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we faced greater challenges during the Cold War and we got through them. But during the Cold War there was no Twitter or Facebook to shape our interconnectedness.

In 500 years of communications history, only four major milestones occurred before the birth of the internet. Johannes Gutenberg's movable type in 1440, the advent of the telegraph and telephone, recorded media (voice and images), and finally, broadcast media (radio and television).

Clay Shirky spoke about the inherent flaw in these old modes of communication during a conference at the U.S. State Department. "The media that is good at creating conversations is no good at creating groups," he told those at the gathering. "And the media that is good at creating groups is no good at creating conversations."

THE CASCADE

Social media emerged at just the right moment in history. It created groups. It created conversations. It connected users.

During the opening decade of the 21st century, our world got smaller and smaller. But its problems became larger. The collision of these two disparate circumstances produced The Great Convergence.

The intersection of the more troubled world with the smaller one happened with stunning alignment.

Soon after the terror attacks of 9/11, accounts of the tragic events were being posted, edited, revised, and amended on social media's first and most powerful online encyclopedia. Wikipedia was founded earlier in 2001 and would soon become the go-to information source for millions of people. On September 11, the site was updated in real time by users, making it the first time a social media site's users reported on a major breaking news event.

In April 2003, large numbers of refugees begin pouring into Chad. They were escaping a little-known part of Sudan called Darfur, and they brought reports of genocide. That same month, thousands of users online escaped real life for a virtual community online, created by Linden Lab, called Second Life.

On May 1, 2003, President Bush made a dramatic landing aboard the *USS Abraham Lincoln* on a fixed-wing fighter plane to announce the end of major combat operations in Iraq. It would soon become known as the “Mission Accomplished” speech. Five days later the author of that speech, and everyone else for that matter, could update their professional profile pages on a new social network: LinkedIn.

In August that year, MySpace went live the same week a great blackout swept across the northeastern U.S., rendering the internet and cell phones useless for days. For those in this part of the country, it would mark the last time they were not connected en masse for an extended period of time.

On February 3, 2004, the CIA announced that contrary to prewar statements, there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The next day, while sitting in his dorm room at Harvard, Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook.

The last week of December 2004 brought tragedy to Southeast Asia. A 9.3 magnitude earthquake created a monster tsunami that slammed into the shores of Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, and other nations, killing more than 186,000 people. Several months later users could view videos of the destruction—or videos on nearly any topic, for that matter—thanks to a new website called YouTube.

July 2006 saw thousands killed in Iraq in the battle with insurgents. In the middle of that trying month, Twitter was released to the public. Users sent 224 tweets that first day, now the equivalent of one-tenth of one second of all daily tweets.

On October 6, 2010, a U.S. drone attack in North Waziristan, Pakistan, killed 11 suspected militants. That same day Instagram officially launched.

And on and on it went. The troubled world and the smaller one continued their collision. The Great Convergence happened in real time.

The Great Convergence changed our sense of geography, community, and responsibility. Problems were no longer “over there” in some far away land. Now, there was no such thing. Our collective triumphs and tragedies were all within reach. The Great Convergence made it easy for groups of like-minded people to band together. A

the business of good

sense of action took hold. It brought people closer in a world gone off the rails.

This zeitgeist shift opened the door for a new conversation. The world was in trouble. This was not a time for business as usual. It took The Great Convergence to bring this conversation to the forefront. Now it is here.

The Great Convergence opened the door to a new era: the era of social entrepreneurship.

It was in this environment that a transformative recipe for change took shape. The confluence of independent factors—a troubled world and a shrinking one—rewrote the rules for how society lives, works, and plays.

Social entrepreneurship is a model that is changing the world. It aims to fix the most entrenched problems facing mankind while building a successful and profitable business for its owners. This model challenges traditional definitions of success. It flies in the face of conventional thinking. It relies on technology and social media to thrive. Anyone can be a part of this movement. Its implications are far reaching for both the for-profit and nonprofit worlds. The Great Convergence explains the *why* behind social entrepreneurship's growth.

Burdened with debt, impotent to change, and beholden to special interests, government doesn't have the moxie to lead global change. The solutions now must come from elsewhere.

Social entrepreneurs are filling that void. And they can do it because of The Great Convergence.

Technology changed *how* social movements organize and coalesce. The Great Convergence changed what those issues were. Before The Great Convergence it was about you, your rights, your liberties, and your freedom. But after, it became something different. It became about us, about humanity.

MORE THAN A DREAM

On August 28, 1963, more than 2,000 buses rumbled into Washington, DC, along with trains, planes, and other vehicles

packed with people from all over the country. Unsure how many people would arrive, the event organizers hoped for a turnout of 100,000. At 7:00 A.M., radio reporter David Eckelston reported ten people had gathered by the Lincoln Memorial. Organizers worried that the event would be a bust. But soon after, throngs of people appeared, and the March on Washington became the largest such gathering up to that time, with more than 250,000 people in attendance. That afternoon they heard the thunderous words of civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis. The now famous speeches, along with the march itself, have been etched into history. But how did they do it?

No email. No Facebook. No Twitter. No SMS (because there were no cell phones). They didn't even have fax machines. All they had was a manual created by the brilliant March on Washington head organizer, Bayard Rustin. Rustin's 12-page booklet, *Final Plans for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*, contained everything an attendee would need, from where to park and what to pack to where to use the bathroom. On the final page, an RSVP asked how many trains, buses, planes, or cars attendee groups planned to use and how many people they expected to come. It needed to be returned by mail. If there were any emergencies on the day of the march, it provided a phone number the captain of each bus, train, or plane should call.

They came for many reasons. Although he lacked a clear pathway to its passage, President Kennedy announced in June he would present a civil rights bill to Congress. Much of the South was still governed by Jim Crow laws that segregated bathrooms, drinking foundations, public places, and public transportation (nine years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, the South was still very much a segregated society). Earlier that summer in Mississippi, Bull Connor used hoses and attack dogs on peaceful protestors, which ignited a firestorm.

"I came because we want our freedom," Percy Lee Atkin of Clarksdale, Mississippi, told a reporter at the march. "What's it going to take to have your freedom?"

Estimates reported more than 60,000 of those who attended were white. The passage of a civil rights bill concerned many of them, too.

Radio reporter Arnold Shaw, who reported all day from the Lincoln Memorial, said, “One woman from San Diego, California, showed us her plane ticket. She said her grandfather sold slaves and she was here ‘to help wipe out evil.’”

Civil rights was *the* social issue of the time. Directly or indirectly, the stain of racism touched every person who attended the march. With passions aflame and tensions high from a summer of violence—Medgar Evers had been shot and killed in Jackson, Mississippi, in early July—it’s easy to understand why people were motivated to take action. One hundred years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, black citizens were done waiting for change. They demanded it now.

It was a complicated endeavor. Imagine getting thousands of people to show up at the same location to support the fight against extreme poverty—an important issue no doubt, yet it pales in comparison to the visceral fight for civil rights in 1963. Everyone who attended the 1963 rally had been impacted one way or another by the civil rights movement. Why would people attend a rally to address poverty in the developing world? Unlike the March on Washington, none of the attendees would be the direct beneficiaries of the change they sought.

The Great Convergence did not create the ability for people to come together for a common cause. But it did change what that common cause could be. Victimhood of injustice was no longer a prerequisite for activism. It turns out knowledge of injustice—agnostic of its setting—could be the spark to action for today’s generation.

Social entrepreneurs of today stand on the shoulders of civil rights leaders. The two movements share much in common. Fighting injustice and inequality, changing the course of history, their bonds run deep. Many social entrepreneurs use the civil rights activism of the 1960s as their North Star. It should be no surprise, then, that the tools and techniques used in that era have been co-opted and rebooted by social entrepreneurs.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS AS GLOBAL CITIZENS

Today's mass-event organizers can tap into The Great Convergence to bring people together on a scale never before possible. They can now attract citizens of the world—Global Citizens.

It started at 10:00 A.M.—precisely the time Bayard Rustin told attendees to arrive for the March on Washington. It was a balmy early spring day with temperatures reaching 83 degrees—the same high temperature recorded on August 28, 1963. And just like at the March on Washington, 250,000 people flooded the National Mall for a special call to action.

But on this April Day the crowd had assembled for a very different reason. People gathered to take action against extreme poverty and climate change. While none of the paid attendees were in extreme poverty, they all demanded a solution. The Global Poverty Project teamed up with the Earth Day Network as the organizing forces behind the event. They created a festive atmosphere for the occasion. To maximize their impact, they replaced the speeches of 1963 with music of today.

Why music? Global Poverty Project, the nonprofit organizer behind this and other similar events, addresses this on its website: “We believe that music transcends boundaries and languages and serves as an outlet for raising awareness around the issues that face everyone. Through music, we have an opportunity to reach millions with the message that we can end extreme poverty by 2030, end climate change, and give people like you the opportunity to take action on issues like ending preventable diseases, cutting carbon emissions, getting kids a better education, and ensuring everyone has safe access to toilets.”

Top entertainers—Usher, Mary J. Blige, Train, Chris Martin, will.i.am, No Doubt, and others—took to the stage. They didn't just perform, they used their microphone as a soapbox.

“To end poverty, it starts, in my opinion, with an education about it,” Usher told the crowd. “I want you to go and investigate for yourself so that you can really understand what's going on.”

He went even further in an interview with the Associated Press. “I felt really good that the issues we are addressing here are on the table,” he said. “Global warming is something that obviously will affect all of us. Clean water and sanitation is something that is very real. I understand and cannot turn a blind eye to what’s going on.”

One of the festival’s hosts, will.i.am said he believed it would be a catalyst, just like the 1963 March on Washington. “What I hope happens post the concert is that people go out and talk about some of the issues that we were spelling out today,” he said. “Talk about solutions, go online, dig deep, and hold our leaders accountable for some of the things that they’re pledging.”

This festival has its own Bayard Rustin. His name is Hugh Evans, and at only 32 years old, he’s changing the world. The Australian-born cofounder and CEO of the Global Poverty Project (which runs the Global Citizen Festival) is determined to bring about the end of extreme poverty by 2030. Working on issues ranging from water and sanitation to health, education, environment, hunger, finance, and innovation, the Global Poverty Project has leveraged more than \$16 billion and received over 30 policy commitments from world leaders. Unlike Rustin, Evans can use numerous tools to connect with a community of like-minded people. With more than 145,000 followers on Twitter and over 721,000 followers on Facebook, it isn’t hard for Evans and Global Citizen to rustle up a crowd.

Evans taps into The Great Convergence and rallies those who are tired of talk without action. What he has found is that people—particularly young people—care about ending extreme poverty.

Each fall Evans’ organization hosts the Global Citizen Festival on the Great Lawn in Central Park. With the skyline of New York City as a backdrop, more than 60,000 people pack the lawn to hear musical performances and to learn how to end poverty. But there’s more to it than that. Getting a ticket to the event requires, for most, more than just purchasing a ticket.

“We’d always conceived of a global citizen as being somebody that believes that extreme poverty is unjust and not something that should be a reality in our world. But the evolution of Global Citizen

as a platform and the Global Poverty Project as an organization has been really interesting,” Evans told a reporter before the 2015 Global Citizen Festival. “With the Global Citizen Festival, we decided we’d take the concept of the traditional charity concert and flip it on its head. So rather than charging people to attend an event and raising money, we came up with this idea that people use their voice, they participate in some way, shape, or form, before coming to the festival. Taking action is really their entry into the festival.”

Evans adapted a gamification model of attendance. By registering on the Global Citizen website and taking an action—which can run the gamut from social media posts to volunteering—users earn points. When users reach enough points, they can secure a ticket to the festival. While some tickets are also available for sale, the majority of people who attend have earned their ticket through their advocacy work with the Global Poverty Project.

“With concerts like Live Aid or Live Earth, people would pay \$120 for a ticket, and that would be their investment in the cause,” Evans said. “What used to happen is on the night [of the concert], people would share these goals—let’s get the G8 leaders to make a massive commitment around debt relief—which is fantastic, there’s nothing wrong with that, but wouldn’t it be awesome if you could use the whole period in the lead-up to the concert to [convey] that message?”

For the 2015 festival there was a push by Evans and his team to make potential attendees go the extra mile. The action steps they needed to take weren’t easy. They weren’t supposed to be easy. They took time, energy, and effort. There were calls to members of Congress, letters to the State Department, and other steps designed to spur action against global poverty.

“Music has a catalytic role in our culture—it has always been a fire starter,” said Michele Anthony, executive vice president at Universal Music, who is involved in the Global Citizen Festival. “There are kids who are initially on [the site] because they couldn’t get two tickets to a tour that was sold out. But the feedback that we’re getting is that even kids who may not be that politically inclined are learning. They’re getting engaged.”

Evidence of The Great Convergence was vividly on display during the September 2015 Global Citizen Festival. The gates opened at 2:00 P.M., hours before the first act was set to play. By 3:45 P.M. the admission line stretched from 72nd Street in Manhattan down Central Park West to Columbus Circle. From there the line swung to the East Side, going all the way to the Plaza Hotel. The crowd, primarily Millennials, waited patiently as the line meandered slower than Manhattan rush hour traffic. Eventually attendees filed past security and onto the Great Lawn, where a massive crowd had already gathered.

I met a 20-something Millennial while the line made its way up to the Great Lawn. “It was a lot of work to earn this ticket, but it was worth it,” she told me. “Sure, I get to attend this awesome concert, but I also did some good in the process.”

It had been a busy 24 hours for Central Park. Just a day before, 80,000 people lined up to catch a glimpse of Pope Francis. While at the United Nations, the Pope made a call to action. The next day, he got it.

Leonardo DiCaprio. Bill and Melinda Gates. Ed Sheeran. Professor Jeffrey Sachs. Beyoncé. Michelle Obama. Coldplay. Malala Yousafzai. Pearl Jam. They were all present. The stars of the music and entertainment world collided with the stars of global development and progress.

There was world-class music and world-renowned speakers. There were videos on the UN’s 17 Global Goals, which are part of the overarching effort to end extreme poverty, reduce income inequality, and prevent climate change.

Evans told *Billboard* magazine that 2 million global actions were taken during the festival. As one music executive put it, “For [attendees] to be involved in helping to effect change daily, that speaks to a different form of activism than perhaps this generation has seen—and that we haven’t seen in a long time.”

Eddie Vedder and Beyoncé teamed up for an acoustic version of Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song” while a Nelson Mandela speech on humanity and overcoming poverty played along.

Michelle Obama appeared on video to highlight the *Let Girls Learn* initiative and then later arrived on the stage to introduce Beyoncé. Vice President Biden gave a rousing speech that seemed to best capture the spirit of the night.

“We have to move beyond, reach beyond, ourselves. We have to be a light to the world, not just in the world. That is what you are all here for tonight,” Biden told the crowd. “I look out and I see lots of global citizens—optimistic, determined, absolutely determined, rejecting the false premise that our challenges are mere fate, with no solutions, and that protecting universal rights is equally universal, because it is.”

What Biden looked out onto were Global Citizens eager to change a broken system. The zeitgeist shift, The Great Convergence, makes it possible to envision an entire reboot of capitalism in a way that lifts people up, solves problems, and promotes lasting change. It’s called Capitalism 2.0, and its engine is social entrepreneurship.



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