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From: Wanda Ballentine

Subject: David Korten speech: "We are participants in the birthing of something new to the human evolutionary experience"

This speech is a good companion to the one by Robert Muller. For those of you not familiar with Korten, (www.davidkorten.org) he is the author of *When Corporations Rule the World*, and *The Post Corporate World -- Life After Capitalism*. He is also a former Harvard Business School Professor, a former Captain in the United States Air Force, and a veteran of the Vietnam War. During his military service he held assignments as an instructor in the Special Air Warfare School at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida and as staff to the Secretary of the Air Force and the Secretary of Defense in the Pentagon. For most of his adult life he worked as a development worker in Africa, Asia, and Latin America seeking to eliminate poverty and the roots of violent conflict. He is presently board chair of the Positive Futures Network, which publishes *YES! A Journal of Positive Futures*. For those not familiar with *Yes!* it is one of the best magazines around putting forth positive ideas, and it has a special section now on the war situation: <http://www.yesmagazine.org/#iraq>

We are participants in the birthing of something new to the human evolutionary experience

David C. Korten

21 March 2003

Federal Building, Seattle

I stand before you today as a patriotic American, a former Captain in the United States Air Force, and a veteran of the Vietnam War.

This day, Friday March 21, 2003, will go down in history as one of America's darkest hours. Our brave sons and daughters have been ordered onto the battlefield to risk the ultimate sacrifice, and American planes and missiles have been launched in a campaign of "shock and awe" against the Iraqi people, possibly the most brutal air assault in history, short of dropping the atomic bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. It is a war most of the world considers unnecessary, immoral and illegal. On this same day the Republicans who control the House of Representatives have used the cover of war and the nation's willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the troops to approve a massive tax cut for the wealthiest Americans and cut disability benefits for military veterans -- thus setting a new standard for political hypocrisy.

The accomplishments of the administration now in power in America are of historic proportion. Domestically, in a mere two years it has turned the largest fiscal surplus in our national history into its largest fiscal deficit -- even before counting the costs of the war in Iraq and the newly passed tax cuts.

In foreign affairs, it took only a year and a half to turn the enormous international good will America enjoyed in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 into the most massive and universal international condemnation of a country's leaders and policies in world history.

Under its newly announced doctrine of preventive war this administration claims the right to launch an unprovoked attack against any nation it believes might present a threat to America's interests -- even years in the future. It is a doctrine of madness -- a path of mutual destruction that violates the most fundamental principles of our Constitution and the United

Nations Charter and has been condemned as immoral by the Pope himself.

By favoring the rule of power over the rule of law, America's ruling junta has convinced much of the world that the most dangerous outlaw regime in the world is the regime now in power in Washington. It may take decades to heal the damage to America and the world for which this regime bears responsibility.

This administration can, however, take credit for one positive accomplishment. By its failures and extremism, it is awakening the people of America and the world to the essential responsibilities of democratic citizenship.

Yes, Saddam Hussein, a man that our own government helped to put in power, is a ruthless dictator who has brutalized his people. We condemn him and will work for his removal from office through means consistent with the rule of law. It is a travesty of justice, however, when the very men who helped to put Saddam Hussein in power and who supported and profited from his rule and brutality, now, in the name of justice launch, a war that will kill additional tens of thousands of Iraqi innocents who will have survived Saddam's brutal rule only to be killed and maimed by bombs and missiles made in America and paid for with our taxes.

Apparently, the mothers of those who have launched this war failed to teach them the most basic of moral lessons: two wrongs do not make a right. This war is not an act of liberation. It is not an act of justice. It is an act of state sponsored tyranny and terror.

Far from being a sign of America's strength and determination, this war is a sign of weakness and of the hubris and moral bankruptcy of a group of right wing extremists who are obsessed with a self-righteous messianic vision of empire. Their vision, spelled out in their own words in public documents, is its own contradiction -- a vision of democracy and a Pax Americana, imposed on the world by the application of overwhelming military force. Afghanistan was first, Iraq is the second.

We know not which country or countries will be third, fourth, fifth, sixth -- or where it will end -- if the extremist architects of this administration's military policies continue to have their way. We only know that perpetual war is a centerpiece of their plan. Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Pakistan have all been mentioned as candidates.

Some will say the war in Iraq is underway. It will soon be over. The time for demonstrations has passed. They say it is time to support the troops and the president.

Let us pray this war ends quickly with a minimum loss of American and Iraqi lives. Our movement -- the global peace and justice movement -- is about far more, however, than the war in Iraq. It is a call to end failed diplomatic and military policies that isolate America from our friends and allies, bankrupt our treasury, and leave us at ever greater risk of terrorist attack. It is a call to embrace a new vision of security based on international cooperation to find and prosecute terrorist networks, to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction in all countries including our own, and to create the world of truly democratic, life-serving societies that can be -- a world in which war is obsolete and every child is born with a reasonable hope for a decent life.

In our call for peace today, we honor and support the brave men and women of the U.S. armed forces who serve their country with courage and devotion, as we honor and support the innocent people of Iraq, especially the children of Iraq, who already have endured horrors no child should ever know. We also honor and support the police, fire, and emergency personnel who will be courageously placing their lives on the line to protect us from the acts of terrorist retaliation likely to come in the days ahead.

The true America patriot stands steadfast in defense of the American ideals of truth, liberty, justice, democracy, and the rule of law. Our patriotism, our commitment to America and the world, will be severely tested in the days ahead by those who falsely equate patriotism with unquestioning obedience to authority.

It has been a tried and true tactic of authoritarian rulers through the ages. If your policies are failing and your authority is slipping, play to fear and hatred, declare a war, and demand absolute loyalty and obedience in the name of a false patriotism.

This is the way of demagoguery. It is not the American way.

So long as those who have launched this war can count on us to bow to their will once our brave troops are in harms way, we shall never again know peace.

In these dark times we must refuse to give in to fear and hatred -- whether of terrorists, our own government, those who look different from ourselves, or those who hold contrary views. When fear and hatred win, freedom, justice, democracy, and the rule of law die. For these American ideals to prevail, we must act and stand together with courage, calm, and wisdom, from a place of inner strength.

We must be ready in these dark days to confront those who would abuse the powers of the state to deny the legitimate rights of any individual -- especially those of immigrants and people of color. It is one of the most basic principles of justice and our great Constitution that the rights of the accused must not be abridged. This is arguably the most sacred of all rights, for without it we all stand naked before the power of a lawless and authoritarian state.

We must support those of our Senators and Representatives in Washington who speak truth with courage and integrity -- like Nancy Pelosi and Dennis Kucinich, and especially our two brave local heroes Representatives Jim McDermott and Jay Inslee.

Last Sunday evening I joined the candlelight peace vigil on Bainbridge Island next to our City Hall. It was a beautiful event, all the more beautiful because we knew we stood with so many millions of others around the world joined in a vision of hope and peace. There was a brisk wind. Sometimes a candle flame would flicker out. But always a neighbor would offer their flame to re-light the darkened candle. Such a fitting and powerful symbolism. Together we can and we shall keep the flame of peace, liberty, justice, democracy, and the rule of law burning.

Consider the implications of what happened only a few weeks ago, on February 15, when some 10 to 11 million people of every nationality, religion, race, and class marched in solidarity in a planetary call for peace and justice. It was the largest and most broadly

international protest action in human history. The *New York Times* proclaimed this expression of global public opinion a new global superpower.

It came together within a space of weeks as a spontaneous self-organizing process of planetary scale. There was no charismatic leader. No financial sponsor. No organizing committee. Some people put out an idea. It spread like a wildfire through the Internet as it captured the imagination of millions of citizen leaders, who picked it up and created an epic event that began to shift the global political consciousness. You could feel it. You could see it. You could hear it in the debates in the United Nations Security Council.

We are participants in the birthing of something new to the human evolutionary experience. We have taken an epic step toward a new planetary politics of hope, love, and healing with the power to change the course of history.

Global civil society is giving substance to the essential truth that in a democracy, sovereignty resides in the people. When politicians dictate our course we call it dictatorship. When private economic interests dictate our course we call it corruption. When dictatorship merges with private economic interests around extreme right-wing nationalism in pursuit of imperial expansion we call it Fascism. Only when those in power are accountable to the leadership of "We the people" can we truly call it democracy.

These insights have especially important implications for those of us who enjoy the extraordinary privilege and responsibility of being American citizens. Our country has been taken over by forces not of our choosing for ends contrary to the great ideals of liberty and justice for all on which it was founded -- founded I might note in a rebellion against empire -- and a king named George.

We take justified pride in the America the world has long looked to as its champion of freedom and democracy. It is now our responsibility as Americans to act from a place of strength and courage to reclaim our government and rededicate this nation to its founding ideals. We must renounce the doctrines of unilateralism, preventive war, and the rule of power over the rule of law and return America to the path of international peace and cooperation. We must work through electoral and judicial processes to assure that the dangerous outlaw administration that is bankrupting our treasury, isolating us from the world, and undermining our security does not serve another term.

We must and we can re-light the flame of freedom to once again shine bright and clear as a beacon of hope and inspiration for the whole of humankind. The place is here. The time is now. The responsibility is ours. We the people -- we are the ones we've been waiting for.

Thank you.

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