

what can we DO?

People tell me that I am too negative, I should be more optimistic. Frankly, I cannot imagine optimism in the world today. A geyser of oil spewing crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico, from a mile under sea level, so deep that humans cannot go down and look at it or fix it. After almost one month we don't know how much oil is actually being pumped into the ocean, but I have seen estimates of "the amount of the Exxon Valdez every two to three days." Unemployment is estimated from 10% up to 40-50% in some population groups (black males 15-35). Meanwhile the banks and the oil companies are making the largest profits in history. The Middle East is steaming, bubbling, almost exploding. Our wars are both dismal adventures that have cost us trillions and gained nothing but numberless deaths and steadily rising enmity. The ice of the poles is melting, glaciers are melting all over the planet. Our Government has released figures that say the first three months of this year were the warmest in recorded history. India, Bolivia, and probably other countries are seriously worried about losing water, and Bangladesh is experiencing unusual flooding deeper inland than ever before — India is reported to consider building a wall to keep an expected exodus out of Bangladesh from overwhelming India. There is more, of course. What I see from here is a planet seething, people objecting, protesting, angry, crazy. Whether global warming is our doing or not is no longer an issue. Global warming is here; only Americans can deny that because they are addicted to a few Media outlets owned by the Big Corporations who rule the world. Anyone with access to a computer has no trouble at all to find all manner of independent news sources.

What is there to be optimistic about?

But there are wonderful people doing wonderful things!

Of course, I know. I know many wonderful people who do wonderful things. And I have an imagine of the orchestra that continued to play Nearer My God To Thee until the unsinkable Titanic tipped and slid into the deep.

Then, they say, You talk doom and gloom, but at least tell us what we can DO.

My answer is always the same. The whole point of my writing is to remind us that it is our *doing* that is the problem. Everything we do nowadays feels "wrong:" from drilling where we shouldn't drill, to endless very expensive medical tests, to useless military surges. We do all the wrong things. We cannot continue to rely on oil and coal to drive a broken economy — broken by the banks no longer controlled by our government. We bail out banks and let people lose their homes as well as their jobs. All that seems so obvious, why can't we see it? It's our need to do something, to fix, improve, progress, that made the enormous disaster that is today.

If you mean what can we do to prevent the world from warming while we continue to live as we do, the answer is simple and you know it as well as I do. The answer of course is, Nothing. We cannot change the world without changing ourselves first. The planet is in a process that cannot be changed by force or tricks or untested science or a million nice people doing nice things. We humans have shown that we are very good at slicing and burning and sticking the planet, but we cannot control, we cannot run the planet. And that means we cannot heal the planet until we heal ourselves.

We do not understand, we have forgotten who we are in relation to the planet. Our forgetting has seriously hurt Mother Earth. Physically, materially, I mean. We have so much power that we can change, and have changed, the face of the planet. We must leave Mother Earth to heal herself. A butcher cannot put a pig back together, he must stop butchering.

We cannot do anything without changing ourselves first, changing how we think of ourselves, how we know ourselves as children of Mother Earth. Yeah, a quaint way to talk about a planet, a thing, a ball of rock and resources that formed us. We who are so clever and powerful that we sent a man to the moon and brought him back. For what?

In my life time the number of humans alive on this ball of resources has tripled. A very few of us have enormous power. Maybe a third of us live reasonably modern lives. At least two of the almost seven billion humans suffer hunger, poverty, and misery unimaginable until today.

We cannot “do” anything to stop global warming, for instance; it is much too late. We must accept the dire consequences of our own stupidities, plural. The current rogue oil well in the Gulf of Mexico is the direct consequence of collectively ignoring reality, thinking science and technology can do anything at all to get the last drop of oil out of the earth for us to burn up. Rush, rush, and forget consequences. Now we have to live with the consequences for months if not years. Everything modern man does has that same frantic hurry-up quality. And literally anything we do, is exactly the *wrong* thing to do,

What we can do is stop doing. Not inventing electric cars, but no cars. Learn again how to live without a refrigerator. Learning again to make your own clothes, using two old shirts to make one pair of shorts. My family was always busy straightening nails so that they could be used again. My sons smile when I tell them that, then go out and buy more brand new nails. Don't buy junk, don't use plastic, recycle. It helps not to watch TV any more. Get to know the world around you as intimately as you can. Know where the animal paths are — even in cities there are paths. Get to know the weeds — most medicinal plants are weeds. Adapt to how the world right around you changes when the planet gets warmer, stormier, crazier. All that and a lot more we can do to change ourselves. The mess we have made of the natural world cannot be mended by us. It's good to plant a tree but better to let grow what will. Nature is wild, a chaos of different species making a sustainable ecology. We humans are part of that, not the makers of, and certainly not the masters of the planetary ecology. Nature is the Wild. A healthy planet is an earth with healthy people. Modest people, simple people, who know they are part of all that is — not frantically climbing an imaginary ladder of power over.

We have to heal ourselves, then Mother Earth may take us in her arms again. What we can do is to become human again. Not the cruel, thoughtless, war machines, greedy for power, we are now. I know with a certainty that we can be again who we were born to be. That is enough doing for several life times.

Do we need cathedrals to worship God amidst fortunes in gold and ivory? Do we need museums to remind us what the world used to be like? The divine is in the Grand Canyon, in the endless desert of the Sahara, the world ocean, now sadly polluted, more acid, with a dangerously diminishing diversity of species after all our *doing*. The divine is in the smile of a baby, in the rich colors of skin, in the song of a coyote, or a frog. There are endlessly more than seven wonders of the world; the world is a wonder.

Right now we seem busy doing our very best to create as much damage as we can. Why? Mother Earth cannot be owned by us, we belong to her. We too are part of the divine, the wonder that makes that unique smile of First People and their wordless songs. We can learn from our far foreparents to take things as they are. No need to change the world, no need to do.

Just **be** — human as we were at first.