

An Interfaith Perspective on Globalization for the Common Good:

The Eighth Annual International Conference

"Globalization: The Challenge to America"

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The Chicago Declaration

We honor the spirit of the native peoples, the Pottawattamie, who dwelled here long ago on wetlands that stretched between a generative river and a great lake, calling it Chikagu, or 'Land of the Wild Onion'. We come together in the city of Chicago, an economic and cultural crossroads, which has been a center of US and international affairs from its inception in 1833. Our conference, meeting in the Land of Abraham Lincoln, has been inspired by the vision of a new President from Chicago, Barack Obama, and the real hope for a new alignment of the common good of the United States with that of the world.

Since our last gathering in 2008, the world has changed significantly. We have entered into the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression. Poverty, social inequality and violations of human rights have widened sharply. Under present national policies, as economic malaise, unemployment and debt continue to mount, the real cost of 'correcting' the market will continue to be borne by the world's poor and the environment. Clearly, climate change is far more serious than we had believed only a year ago; and some researchers now say that without a comprehensive intervention to reverse the trendlines pointing toward species extinction, we cannot even assume that there will be future generations upon the Earth. As all of these social, economic and ecological crises heighten, international political tensions also grow more serious. Consumptive individualism and neo-liberalism are in crisis. Globalization is no longer merely the challenge of our growing interdependence, it is also a challenge of transforming human experience and values in a time of crisis. We have no choice but to face these new clouds on the horizon and to embrace real change.

Many of the world's problems originated in US policies and yet the potential for solving them is also uniquely vested in the United States. The US must play a significant role in the determination of the new world that is emerging through this present crisis. In helping shape institutions that will take us beyond market economies committed to uncontrolled growth, the US must also join with other states in charting the pathways toward social justice and the realization of human rights. Policy must now embrace all of the participants in globalization, not only in Washington DC and the world's capitals, but in global civil society, business, education, the media and among all other members of the global community. This entails a transition from a global social philosophy of individual rights and entitlements, excessive economic growth and ecological despoliation to one of increasing inclusiveness and responsibility. Our challenge is great.

In a time of continuing crisis and polarizing viewpoints, can the United States and the world agree on a new ethical approach to the global economy?

The participants of the 8th annual conference of Globalization for the Common Good have explored many of the structures needed to move us toward the global good. As conference delegates, we affirm our inalienable rights, not only as local and national citizens, but as members of the human race and citizens of the planet. We are heirs to the whole evolution of consciousness and culture, which means that we human beings have to see ourselves as part of the Earth community and recognize that all of life is bound together. We realize that, as members of the household of humanity, we must provide security, sanctuary and constructive engagement for all of our human family.

Sustained by the bounty of all, called by the Sacred, and animated into action by the Spirit of Peace, Justice, and Reverence for All Life, we pledge to hold ourselves responsible and accountable for many commitments. We affirm the vital importance of

- non-violence, dialogue and charity in personal, ethnic and national relations, and deplore the increasing violence in our world, acutely aware that, with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, there is an increasing possibility of 'humanicide' which would take genocide to an even higher magnitude of horror
- the full participation of women in the work of remaking our world, recognizing the rich complexity of the feminine dimension of the human and the creative compassion, insight and vision that women offer
- the physical and cultural survival of indigenous peoples through new expressions of sovereignty and self-determination
- the world's wisdom traditions, which offer living examples of the fruits of contemplation and reflection for contemporary society
- the values that all religions share, arising from their different histories, and the need for particular religions to look beyond the confines of their own dogmas and practices and recognize our common humanity in responding to the cries of those who suffer and in aiding community life through the task of rebuilding and reconciliation
- the rapidly developing global interreligious movement, which offers a radical challenge to sectarian intolerance and violence in the name of religion
- the commons, which has much to teach us about the self-governance and allocation of our shared resources – natural, social, cultural, and intellectual – as an alternative that transcends the interests of the private sector and the State sector in preserving the values of our inherited gifts for future generations
- biodiversity and interspecies ethics, and the need to recognize and legitimate the essential rights of all of Earth's life forms
- intergenerational engagement of our elders with our visionary youth, who must no longer be ignored in the creation of new

- economic, technological and spiritual perspectives that lead toward action for the common good within society and in their own lives
- elementary schools, high schools and universities in developing 'whole person - whole planet' education – including the teaching of conflict resolution, a spiritual and ethical approach to mind, body and spirit, health, a curriculum on world religions, and the integration of ethics and economics – as a means of inspiring global citizenship
 - a new global architecture for a virtuous economy, ensuring a financial system that is more responsive and fair, a trade system that is socially and ecologically just and sustainable, and a monetary system which provides equitable purchasing power for everyone
 - *businesses* in encouraging competitive markets and economic growth, but also in embracing their intrinsic moral responsibility to democratize both labor and capital and preserve the natural commons of the planet for future generations
 - independent media in informing, educating and representing cultures, nations and religions in a balanced, technical and socially responsible manner
 - the internet and new communications technology – an emergent social and cultural commons – which should remain open to all users for the purpose of networking, distributing and sharing relevant information

Today, we face a daunting transition as our de-centered, post-modern world gives way to an uncertain world of global governance. It is true that people will only accept change when they face necessity – and that we only face necessity when a crisis has come upon us. Such a moment is upon us now. We must engage these global challenges as opportunities for lasting transformational change. The problems of globalization need to be brought down to human scale. This can only be done by adopting global policies commensurate with the local values of people across the planet through the bottom-up process of grassroots globalization – the infusion of our local values into global decision-making.

The challenge to the United States, and to the world, is to adopt these new global standards and ensure that they become global norms. We believe that the interests of the US and the world are congruent. We ask: is the United States prepared to assist the shift of the destructive global political-economic-environmental order from one of unbridled growth to one that embraces material wealth creation yet also preserves social and ecological well-being, increases human happiness and enhances community life and meaning? We call upon the United States to embrace this new identity and legitimacy in a time fraught with global uncertainty but also rich with opportunity for the global common good.

Globalization for the Common Good, at Loyola University, Chicago June 4, 2009