

Interviewee: Kevin Danaher

Affiliation: Co-Founder of Global Exchange

Interviewer: Miguel Bocanegra

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Interview Summary:

Kevin Danaher describes how his anti-Vietnam War background and education led to his co-founding Global Exchange. With the goal of preventing the WTO meetings, Global Exchange joined Rainforest Action Network, the Ruckus Society, and Art and Revolution to form the Direct Action Network. Danaher says that the events in Seattle garnered support for several different protests around the world. He also describes the “massive civil rights abuses” of the police, the importance of technology for speedy communication and decision-making about global issues, and his belief that we are in the stages of the “first-ever global revolution.”



MB This Miguel Bocanegra. I am interviewing Kevin Danaher, co-founder of Global Exchange. It is February 15, about 12 p.m. Kevin Danaher, is okay for us to use this interview for the purposes of the WTO History Project?

KD Yes, sir. It’s totally okay.

MB Great. So, can you give us just a brief bio of yourself, and maybe, since you’re a co-founder of Global Exchange, maybe what led up to Global Exchange and then participation in the WTO?

KD Yes. I was born in 1950 in New Jersey. I grew up in a lower income working class Irish Catholic family. My government tried to send me to Vietnam when I was 18. I found that very frightening. That caused me to start questioning what my government was doing, bombing the hell out of people who were no threat in any way to us, couldn’t be a threat, and the more I studied U.S. foreign policy, the more I realized that the United States is seen as an arm-twisting bully by most people in the world, and I was raised by my father to not like bullies and to stand up against bullies.

So that questioning continued through college. I went through and got a PhD from the University of California, did my dissertation on U.S. policy towards South Africa, which U.S. policy was pretty consistently on the side of the side of the white minority against the black majority, so that helped educate me even more about the main connection between U.S. elites and Third World

elites is a commercial connection. It's about money. It's about transnational corporations, and then it forces the policymakers to lie to the American people about why we're involved in these different countries to make the American people believe that we're actually on the side of the good guys when, in fact, it's about making money, making profits.

So my education and my research and writing tended to focus on these global institutions, the World Bank, IMF. I started researching them back in 1975, so I had quite a bit of experience with them. When the World Trade Organization came along in 1995, I had already known about GATT, the treaty underlying the WTO. So it was natural for myself and my organization, Global Exchange, to commit itself to educating the public about this institution, trying to force it out into the light of day, the Dracula principle. You get these institutions out in the sunshine, and they wither up and die real quick.

The background on Global Exchange is we were started in 1988. There were three of us. Had no money, no office or anything like that, and we gradually built it up to where we've got about 40 staff people now, about a 6,000 square foot office in San Francisco. We have fair trade stores in Berkeley and San Francisco that sell fair trade crafts and fair trade coffee. We do reality tours where we take people out to other countries with a sort of reverse Club Med ideology. Get people off the beach and get out there and meet real people. We're up to 40 trips a year just to Cuba. We do Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Senegal, Iran, Iraq, Northern Ireland, Indonesia, India, Vietnam, a lot of different countries.

What people learn when you take them to those countries, the first thing they learn is not about those countries; it's about the United States. They learn they've been lied to, that the people in those countries really want to be our friends. They don't want to be our enemies, and it helps undermine racism by taking Americans there and making them realize they have more in common with these people than they do separating them.

We put out educational materials, books, videos, comic books, tapes, a lot of public speaking. We have a speakers bureau that brings in foreign speakers, usually grassroots leaders, to go around the U.S. and teach people what's really going on in the world. We do all sorts of grassroots linkage building, because we think that that's the future. If there's going to be a democratic global government and a democratic global economy, it's got to come out of the grassroots and it's got to be participatory rather than the current representative system where you get to choose this rich white guy or this rich white guy that will represent you. We don't think that that's really democratic as we witnessed in the last election where the guy who got less votes became president. What's that? What's the Electoral College?

So basically what we're trying to do is educate the citizens in the United States as to what's wrong and what's our responsibility for the social crisis,

massive inequality in the world, children starving to death, etc., environmental crisis, all the major biological systems are in a state of collapse, and the moral crisis that a lot of people are putting their heads in the sand and trying to ignore what's going on or cynical responses. "Yeah, I know there's hunger, but, but, but..." There's always a but, and the but is their excuse to do nothing.

I think if you look historically, whether it's the "Good Germans" who stood by while Hitler killed millions of people, or the people who didn't fight against slavery, etc., we will be judged one way or the other, by God if you believe in God or by the god of history if you don't. We will be judged and we want people to participate in making history and fixing what's wrong with the world.

MB

Great. So I guess that leads perfectly into why you guys participated in the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999. Can you articulate Global Exchange's participation in the protests in Seattle?

KD

It was kind of interesting in that we knew that Clinton had invited them to have this big ministerial meeting in the United States. We knew it was significant, that they were going to try to launch a new round of trade negotiations and a round can last seven or eight years, and during that time a lot of legislation for the planet gets written. And we knew they were only going to meet in the U.S. once, so this is our one big chance.

As it turned out, I happened to be in Seattle giving some talks up at the UW on the day when it was announced, and I remember very distinctly when we heard, because we were thinking it would be Honolulu or San Diego or someplace remote or right wing or something like that. When we heard that it was Seattle, it was like, "Yippee!" We immediately jumped on our cell phones and email networks and started spreading the word and saying, okay, it's Seattle.

Part of the reason they picked Seattle, I think, was because Boeing and Microsoft ponied up a lot of money. The contradiction there is that companies like Boeing and Microsoft rely on very well educated workers and very well educated workers expect a certain level of transparency in government. They can read critical literature as well as rah, rah, the system's great literature. You have a long tradition of trade unionism, of forest activism defending our old growth forests, etc. People don't say the Left Coast for nothing.

So Global Exchange was already very involved in struggles around the World Bank and the IMF, struggles around the MAI, the Multilateral Agreement on Investments, which was a major victory. All the G-7 governments, the industrial country governments and all the big corporations wanted that MAI treaty to go through and grassroots citizen pressure stopped it. We were involved in the struggle against NAFTA. We were involved in the successful

struggle against Fast Track, the abdication of congressional power over finessing the details of trade agreements allowing the President to basically present a trade package to the Congress and Congress only being able to vote up or down without the ability to mess with the details. That was defeated.

We had been involved in a lot of those struggles, so it was perfectly natural for us to be involved in the WTO protests. We got together with three other groups, Rainforest Action Network, Ruckus Society and Art and Revolution, and we put together a call to the movements to form a Direct Action Network to not just protest the WTO, but actually to do mass nonviolent, and I stress nonviolent, civil disobedience to actually try to prevent the meetings from going forward.

The response to that call was overwhelming and very soon, within a matter of weeks, the problem was how do you find a room big enough to hold all the representatives of the Steelworkers and the environmental groups and all these other organizations that wanted to participate in this act of defiance. So, we participated in helping this coalition get going.

One of the things going on in the movement that is very healthy is people are realizing that just as you as an individual, if you're going to be a successful member of a team, you have to subordinate your ego to the team effort. Now people are realizing that at the organizational level, it's not enough to be a good organization, Global Exchange or whoever. You have to learn to subordinate your organization's ego to the needs of the movement, and that's how you really do effective coalition building as opposed to the old method, which was, "Oh, we have the right tactics and the right focus. You should join us and come in behind us," kind of thing. It's a much more democratic ideology.

What evolved in the process was a very democratic process that respected everybody's space, consensus decision-making, a very flat hierarchy, really not much hierarchy at all, more of a "hub and spokes" model with affinity groups electing representatives to spokescouncils, people being trained not only in nonviolence, organizing and nonviolent philosophy and nonviolent tactics, but also evolving a different kind of organizational structure where it's all lieutenants and no generals.

So it was not just about stopping the WTO. It was also evolving a way in which masses of people can come together in a very organized way and feel ownership over the process.

MB

So do you think that was a successful process? Were there any conflicts that arose out of trying to shift?

KD

I think it was very successful. We succeeded in making history. We dragged the snake out from under the rocks so that people could see it in the light of

day. What happened in the event was our unity on the outside created disunity on the inside. Clinton, the sleaze politician that he is, sort of automatically responded with an attempt to divide the people out in the street by tossing a bone to the trade union movement, saying, "Oh, we're for enforceable trade union rights."

Well, it didn't work. For one thing, the trade unionists that were out there were pretty well educated on the WTO and they were pretty hard line opposed to it. But what it did inside the WTO, when Clinton put out that speech about enforceable labor rights, the Third World elites within the WTO freaked out, because from their standpoint, what do they have to offer the transnational corporations to attract them to their country, serving up their workers on a platter at low wages and also serving up their environment at low prices.

So right away they started saying, "Enforceable labor rights? What the hell are you talking about?" and that was coming on top of decades of being treated like junior partners in the whole process. The way these trade negotiations typically have worked is the big industrial country governments get together. They work out the plan of what they want, and then they present it to the Third World countries as a fait accompli, and they say, "You want to sell stuff in our countries? You're going to sign on to this."

So all this talk about, "Oh, the WTO is democratic because each government gets one vote." It's bullshit. I mean, it just doesn't work that way. So you had a built-up resentment, the slap in the face by Clinton, and a lot of these Third World governments just started saying, "Hey. Now wait a minute. We're not going to put up with this anymore."

You also had a split between the U.S. and the European community around a whole bunch of different issues. The banana dispute, the bovine growth hormone, biotechnology, seeds, a whole range of issues where there had been serious conflict between the U.S. and the Europeans.

You also had conflict and splits within the European community between the trade ministers and the environment ministers, where the trade ministers were trying to push commerce über alles, and a lot of the environment ministers were saying, "Hey. I can't sign onto this stuff because if I sign onto it and I go back home, my constituents who are mainly worried about preserving the environment are going to eat me."

So all of those different kinds of divisions, and there's even more than those, fractured them. I think if you look at all political struggles, unite friends and divide adversaries, the side that's more united is usually the winner. Those trade talks ended in a complete collapse. That is unprecedented in these international trade negotiations.

There was one case back under the Nixon administration which I mentioned in my book where there were serious conflicts, but they at least issued a communiqué at the end. There were some serious conflicts in trade talks under the Reagan administration. Still, there was never a total collapse. They would always come out with some patchwork at the end with a communiqué. In this particular case in Seattle, there wasn't even a final communiqué. They couldn't agree on anything. So it was amazing in that for the first time ever, a citizens' movement had just stopped, had physically stopped, the international trade machine, the rule-making machine from doing to us what they were planning on doing.

That doesn't mean the WTO doesn't exist, but I think you can see the serious crisis they have in that the only country that was willing to host the next ministerial meeting is Qatar. Qatar doesn't have a constitution. It doesn't have political rights. It's run by a monarch who came to power in 1995 by overthrowing his father, so if this is family values and democracy, we're in deep doo-doo.

MB

So, that can go right into the next question. What do you think are the next steps in organizing against the WTO in issues of globalization, corporate globalization?

KD

Well, the next steps happened before the tear gas cleared in Seattle. Those of us who are part of the Fifty Years is Enough Network, which is a coalition of over 200 organizations fighting the World Bank and the IMF, we said, "Oooh." The April meetings, the spring meetings of the World Bank and IMF in Washington, and we started then with three months' lead time and put on the biggest protest the World Bank and IMF have ever had. That, then, touched off the protests in Prague in September and coming up this fall, September 28 to October 4, 2001, there's going to be the biggest ever again demonstrations outside the World Bank and the IMF.

The way it works is the World Bank and the IMF have two meetings a year; one in the fall for about a week, which is their important meetings, and then a less significant meeting in the spring. The spring meetings outside, the spring protests at the World Bank and IMF in April, 1999, a year and a half ago, had about 25 protestors. A year later, spring 2000 following Seattle, we had about 25,000 protestors. You don't go from 25 protestors to 25,000 without something significant having taken place, and what took place was Seattle.

Seattle showed us the potential that if we can put enough people on the street, we can nonviolently, one, maybe jam up their meeting by just making it impossible for them to get all their people into the building, but two, put them on the front page, and that's the main thing we're looking for here. We're looking for a debate. We're looking for a full public discussion. If these institutions, if their rulemaking and the kinds of policies they promote were exposed to the public and the public understood what was going on, there's no

way these institutions could keep going the way they are, and that's why they operate in secret.

It's why the WTO keeps its documents secret. The World Bank and IMF when they sign a loan agreement with a country, it doesn't get announced, the details don't get announced until after it's signed so it's fait accompli. You can't do anything to change it. They operate in secret and they refuse to debate us, because if they were exposed to the light of public opinion, it all falls apart because most people understand that the key principle, the key organizing principle of humanity of the planet should be a life value, not a money value. What these guys are saying in these institutions is that money values should dominate life values, and what we're saying is life values, that is, human rights and the environment, should dominate commercial values.

You're either going to have the economy subordinated to society, or society and nature subordinated to the economy. In a public debate, we'll win that debate every time. The public will be on our side, which is why these bankers and corporate types, they shun debate. They will not come out and debate us in public.

In Washington in April of 2000, the Jim Lehrer News Hour called me, the producer called and said can you guys put up some people from the movement, two people from the movement, to debate? We put up Juliette Beck from Global Exchange and Vandana Shiva from India. The World Bank/IMF guys refused to appear on the same night. They said, "No, you've got to have two nights; one night for us and one night for the protestors." They would not subject themselves to our questioning.

So, one, they're a bunch of pompous asses. Two, we'll kill them in a debate, because they don't have the facts on their side. They've been running the global economy for 50 years. There's more inequality now than there was 50 years ago. There's more environmental destruction. Community is destroyed, etc. etc. Things are in worse condition than when they started implementing these policies, so the facts and moral authority are on our side.

MB

Why do you think, because you mentioned Seattle as being this catalyst that spawned these different protests, and I'm wondering why do you think it was Seattle? It wasn't the first meeting of the WTO. Why was it Seattle in 1999, why was it at this particular moment and this particular place that this happened and that people are kind of talking about corporate globalization much more, and open space?

KD

You've got to remember that the WTO is based in Geneva, Switzerland, that most Americans are never going to get a chance... I mean, I've been there and protested outside their headquarters, but most Americans are not going to have a chance to do that. So this is the one chance. We knew we were going to have one chance and one chance only to have our say with this institution. Bill

Clinton had invited them. Bill Clinton's foreign policy was basically let the corporations have whatever they want. He gave us NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, which has been a disaster for the majority of Americans, as well as the majority of Mexicans and Canadians, the three countries participating in it.

He tried to do the MAI. He tried to do Fast Track, which those two things we stopped. And he brought us the WTO. The U.S. was the main country pushing the WTO, which is an enforcement arm for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which if you look at the way it works, that GATT is, the key word is tariffs. General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. A tariff is a very specialized tax. It's a tax that is only paid by transnational corporations. What the GATT has done for over 40 years is to lower the taxes on transnational corporations. It's the biggest tax reform movement ever in world history. It transferred trillions of dollars from government, that is us, we the people, to the private corporations. That's reflected in both sides. On the side of the corporations they've got deep pockets, huge profits, mergers and acquisitions, paying their executives hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

On the other side, on the government's side, every government is bankrupt, and every government is in debt. The U.S. Federal Government debt is over three times the size of all Third World debt combined, right? The Third World debt is about \$2 trillion. The U.S. Federal Government debt is well over \$6 trillion.

So what you have is a bankrupting of government that then acts as like a sword of Damocles over the head of the politicians, saying, "You've got to cut your budget. What are you going to cut? You going to cut health care, education? How about the military? No, no, no. Don't cut the military." And that's going on around the world, an attack on the welfare state.

The reason for that is when corporations go transnational starting in the 1950's, and they start to source their labor in many different countries, then you have no interest as a company in maintaining the quality of any particular national workforce, because you're sourcing your labor all over the place and you can move your factory out of the United States and move it to Mexico or China or wherever and, in fact, that's what's happened. The entire manufacturing base of the United States has left the country.

So this is not just about helping poor people in Third World countries. It is also about protecting our standard of living and our right as a people within the United States. And people sense that. One of the protestors was quoted as saying, "The WTO made the mistake of just pissing off too many people." If you get everybody angry at you, and that's the problem with writing a constitution for the global economy where you want to put commerce in the driver's seat and everybody else in the trunk, is people see that their interests are threatened, and the magic of the protest was a lot of different interests saw

it in their self-interest to come together with other people who, maybe they disagreed with on a lot of other issues, but they understood on this issue of the WTO. We had a shared interest.

MB

So, do you think that this, the global citizens movement and organizing around corporate globalization is different than earlier activist eras?

KD

Yes. Yes, because it's inherently transnational. People have realized that the corporate enemy is transnational, so we have to be inherently transnational. You've got to remember, also, if you go and you interview a lot of the individuals, like me, I got radicalized in the anti-apartheid movement, Central American solidarity movement when Reagan was killing all these people in Central America, around East Timor in Indonesia, all these different international issues where we were taught by our brothers and sisters around the world, "Look. It's nice that you come here to South Africa or wherever and you want to help us. If you really want to help us, go back and change your country, because it's your country that's the one that's providing the weaponry and the financing to these undemocratic elites in order to suck wealth out of the countries."

It shows up in the fact that if you look at Africa, the areas with the most natural wealth have the most exploitation and injustice. The gold in South Africa leads to apartheid. The oil in Nigeria leads to horrible civil rights abuses and environmental destruction. So clearly something is wrong when you have an area that's very rich and yet there's all that suffering. Look at the United States, Appalachia, the section in the eastern United States where all the coal was buried. Well, it's also where you have the most poverty, because all those billions of dollars worth of coal that were taken out of Appalachia wasn't for the benefit of the local people; it was an extractive model controlled by corporate elites sucking the money out and transferring it to Wall Street or wherever.

So, there was a long education process that had gone on before people hit the streets. They were out there armed not only with knowledge, facts and details, but also with a sense of moral authority, that we're the ones who want to save nature from being destroyed and not have a planet with starving children. That's a very powerful combination. So on the one side, the people in power, the minority in power, have the guns and the money, and we have the facts and the moral authority and the potential for true democracy.

Mass mobilizing is a tactic that the elites will never use. You will never see thousands of bankers in suits with attaché cases outside a Greenpeace meeting locking their arms. It's not going to happen. The closest they can come to that is sending the police out to tear gas us, whereas we can mass mobilize. The theory of nonviolence is that if you put enough people out in the street, you don't have to be violent. You can be absolutely peaceful. It's the power, the overwhelming presence of thousands and thousands of people stamping their

feet and raising their voices in unison makes it clear to the people in power that things have to change.

MB

Yes. Actually, there was that conflict. I saw an interview that you did on Free Speech TV with an Anarchist, and I remember there was a discussion, a debate, between the different strategies that were occurring during the WTO between property destruction and just nonviolent direct action, and not letting people get into the protests. Can you kind of articulate the distinction that was made between those two different strategies between the people that were doing property destruction and what was going on there?

KD

Yes. There was a very long, drawn-out process where the movement discussed and debated what the rules of engagement should be on the day on the street. What we came up with was four basic categories: no property destruction, no attacking the police, including verbally, no drugs and alcohol, and one other one. I forget, but basic principles of nonviolence that came out of a very long, drawn-out, democratic dialogue of decision-making. In the event there was a small group of people who decided that they were just going to overrule that, they were going to veto it, and it's not an issue of property destruction. That's not the issue. The issue is not the relationship between a person and broken windows. It's the relation between that person and other people in the movement who have gone through a democratic process and decided on a particular set of rules for the demonstration that everybody else agrees to, and then you, in a tiny minority, ultra-radical, "I know better than you because I'm a real revolutionary" attitude, that I'm going to just do what I want to do, even if it jeopardizes the physical safety of other human beings. And I don't care what your politics are. I don't care where you come from, or what you look like. Nobody, and I say nobody, has the right to endanger other people's physical safety. That's just wrong. So if you're breaking a window and some worker or customer inside that store gets glass in their eye, what are you going to say to their family? What are you going to say to the trade union that's trying to organize those workers and bring them into the movement, when they come to you and say, "Hey, Mookie. You just caused this person to get their eye knocked out?"

Secondly, Nike Town and these other places, they have insurance on those windows. You're not hurting them. They just call their insurance company. They send in some workmen. They put up plywood. The next day they put new windows in. Bingo. But in the process, the media have taken that image and sent it out around the world, and even though the window breaking happened at like two or three in the afternoon and the cops started shooting us at ten a.m., the way it got portrayed to people around the world was, first they show the window breaking, then they show the cops attacking us as if the police were justified. The police were not justified. It was a police riot. They committed massive civil rights abuses, which they are being sued in court for, which the chief of police in Seattle had to resign in disgrace over. (tape runs out) ...replaced the existing system, which does violence against people and

against nature. And you try to bring that change about by using the same kind of methodology that we're criticizing the system for. That appears contradictory to most people. The means do not justify the ends, and I understand the frustration. I understand. I wanted to break things, too, because I was pissed off and getting shot and tear gassed, but it's not about me. It's not about venting one's emotions. It's about building a movement that can attract enough people to create a mass movement. That's what revolutions are based on, mass movements, otherwise it's a poosh, it's a coup d'etat.

Well, how do you get a mass movement? You don't get a mass movement by scaring people away with flames and bombs and breaking things. That's going to drive mainstream people away. We want to bring mainstream people into the movement, and I think the only way you do that is through very disciplined, nonviolent, mass direct action strategies that don't treat nonviolence as a tactic that you do, like put on a jacket, take it off, but it's a way of life. It's a belief system. It's about reverence and respect. It's about a sense of the sacred, right, and that you don't achieve a different kind of system by breaking shit.

It's like the slogan, "Smash capitalism one window at a time." It's kind of a joke, but what happened in the event was there was some hostility and some trading of name calling between people who were pissed off at the window breaking and those who did it. You've got to remember, too, some of the window breaking and stuff was not people with any kind of political ideology. They say the Anarchists. Well, there were plenty of Anarchists there in the street who were not breaking stuff, and there were also people who were breaking stuff who were not Anarchists. They were just street kids who saw a chance to have some fun. It's like bungee jumping, right?

What happened in the event was a lot of us in the movement started reaching out to each other and saying, "Hey, come on, look. Let's not be calling each other names and stuff. Yes, we have some disagreements." It's a simple way to settle this stuff. If you, for example, think that breaking windows is a way to achieve our goals, and I think that mass nonviolent direct action is a better way, then we say, okay, we just don't demonstrate next to each other. You do your action in one part of town or on one particular day. We'll do ours in a different part of town or on a different day, and we'll see who gets further.

But you notice that's not the way it happens. The people who like to do property destruction tend to try and piggyback off of those of us who do the organizing to put thousands of people on the streets. As it was in Seattle, we were in the middle between the cops and people doing the property destruction, and that's just not right. If you want to do that stuff, fine. Just don't do it near me. Don't do it near thousands of people who have a different set of principles.

But what happened in the event was people reached out to each other, had discussions, had debates, and by the time April came around and we did the protests in Washington at the IMF and the World Bank, it was much more disciplined. There was hardly any property destruction. It was militant. There were some confrontations with the police. Some of it got physical, but there wasn't the kind of breakdown in rules of engagement that happened in Seattle.

MB

I guess one last question. Do you think the Internet has affected the way politics or organizing people or organizing around...?

KD

Yes, totally. There's no way that you can understand what went on in Seattle or in any of these other mass demonstrations, particularly now that they're going international and happening in a lot of different countries, without understanding the way in which the Internet and computer technology has made it possible for people to communicate across all sorts of boundaries and the speed with which we can do it.

We have now groups like Global Exchange, the Fifty Years Is Enough Network here in the North. We have advisory groups in the global south, we have campaigns like the World Bank Bond Boycott; the Web site is worldbankboycott.org. We have partners in the global south that are direct participants and have decision-making authority and input into our policies. It happens overnight. It happens at a moment's notice because we have this technology now.

Now, that's not to say that the corporations and the Pentagon and the World Bank, etc., don't use it and they have more expensive equipment than we do, but if you look at what happened in Seattle, we whooped their ass on the technology side in terms of cell phones, Internet, Web sites, whatever.

One way of thinking about it is if you look at the sort of a military analogy is, they're the big fortress with the high walls and cannons and all that kind of stuff, and we're the mass guerrilla units surrounding it. But we have mobility. We're the mosquitoes and they're Arnold Swartzenegger. Well, if enough mosquitoes bite Arnold Swartzenegger, he's going to leave the forest. So it's a Lilliputian strategy. It's a strength that comes out of weakness.

In Ethiopia they have a saying, "When spiders unite, they can tie down a lion," and that's part of what's going on is people realizing that if all of us small citizen forces come together, we can force these guys to change and then go on to actually replace these institutions with more life-affirming institutions.

MB

Great. Is there anything else that we didn't cover that you'd like to add?

KD

Well, just one thing. I think there's a very personal kind of message that we need to send out to people, and that is the planet is confronted with a serious crisis right now, a crisis of inequality. We have about 30,000 children a day

dying from the effects of hunger. We have children dying from things like measles, where the vaccine costs ten cents, millions of children dying from gastroenteritis, diarrhea, the “cure” is water with a little bit of salt and sugar.

This is stuff that shouldn't be happening. The reason it is happening is because of inequality. The market only moves product to people with money. People without money die.

There's also an environmental crisis. Every major biological system is in a state of collapse. And there's a third crisis caused by the first two, and that's a moral crisis, a crisis of cynicism and apathy of people in wealthy areas of the planet saying, “Oh, well, yeah. You know, there's these problems, but I'm only one person. What can I do?” It's like, what am I, Siamese twins? It's a stupid thing to say, but it's an expression of powerlessness. So I think people are realizing that powerlessness corrupts and absolute powerlessness corrupts absolutely.

We have a responsibility here that's been laid at our feet of either fixing what's wrong with the planet, or seeing destruction and calamity of such a serious nature that we can only vaguely imagine how bad it's going to be right now, and if we don't get our asses in gear and get active and recruit more people to this movement and build a mass movement, we're going to really go down looking really stupid in history.

But I think what's happening is we're in the early stages of the first ever global revolution. Every other revolution up to this point was a national revolution that sought to seize state power in a capital city. This is a global revolution which aims to change the fundamental rules by which the planet is organized. If you look at the Zapatista uprising in 1994/95, they didn't rise up saying, “We want to seize power in Mexico City.” They rose up against the neo-liberal model, saying, “Look, our children are starving and our forests are getting cut down. We refuse to live on our knees. We'd rather die on our feet.”

That had such an incredible response from people around the world that it prevented the Mexican government from crushing them, which they could have done militarily, but politically there was so much opposition and solidarity with the Zapatistas.

So we're truly in a new historical era. The Cold War is over. They don't have that anti-Communist propaganda to scare us with. Now people are waking up all over the planet. Global Exchange works in dozens of countries, and we see it everywhere we go. People are standing up, realizing that somebody can only ride you if you're bent over. If you stand up, you have a chance for true freedom. So I'm very encouraged and very optimistic. I have a lot of hope for what's going to happen in the next couple of decades.

And, yeah, there will be struggle and strife, but we're going to make history.

MB | Right. Well, thanks a lot.

KD | My pleasure.

End of Interview

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