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**THE  
MILLENNIAL  
AGENDA**



## ➤ **The Mission of a Generation:**

### **Restoring the American Dream**

**History shows that every generation has a mission. Some rise to the challenge nobly, as the Greatest Generation rose to the challenge posed by the Great Depression and the rise of fascism. Others muddle through, as did the Silent Generation of the 1950s, who largely maintained the comfortable status quo they inherited from their parents.**

For the Baby Boomers, the verdict seems to be mixed. They played a key role in expanding human rights to previously oppressed groups (Blacks, women, gays), ushered in the information technology and Internet revolution, and opened the national consciousness to new forms of intellectual and social experience. But they have failed (so far) to find the right balance between economic and social values, as evidenced by a wealthy nation plagued by a sense of moral and spiritual emptiness.

It is always easier to define a generation's mission after the fact. But it's already possible to identify many of the crucial challenges Generation We faces in the early decades of the twenty-first century.

Generation We is inheriting a damaged future and a series of problems that are of crisis proportions. Things are not going to get better on their own; without decisive action, we face societal decline and potential collapse. Generation We has no choice other than to innovate their way out of the mess they (and we) are in.

We have spent a lot of time talking about the issues of the day. This book is a call to action. It has been written to suggest an agenda, a slate of actions that the entire Millennial generation must rally around, no matter what their party or their religious, geographic, gender, or racial characteristics. The agenda becomes a plan when the voters insist that elected officials and private industry must address it and when measures for implementation, including accountability and deadlines, are instituted. The plan must be inclusive and bipartisan, and it



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must be supported by the political will to implement it.

Like any large group of people, the members of Generation We don't agree on everything. But they all share the need for a future worth living, where they can enjoy—in the immortal words of the Declaration of Independence—"certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Remember that the majority of our nation's founders were only in their twenties and thirties during the crucial years from the Revolution in 1776 to the implementation of the Constitution in 1789. Like Generation We, they shared an agenda, worked out solutions together, and in the end created

the greatest form of government the world has ever seen.

Today's youth don't yet realize how powerful they are or how deeply they agree on basic values, despite differences in race, religion, party affiliation, geography, and gender. They don't yet share an agenda, largely because the power elites and the industries and media they control have prevented the unification of youth around a common purpose. We hope this book will help change this dynamic.

## PROJECT FREE—INNOVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENERGY

Many times in the past the world has changed when ordinary people—the offended masses being oppressed by those in power—got fed up with their condition and did something about it. The thing that will change our world today is the vote of the youth. We need the political will to blunt the power of the special interests, to elect those who are fit to serve and will focus on the best long-term interests of our country, and to vote out those who are obstructionist, short-sighted, and self-interested.

We believe Generation We, together with their supporters from other generations, can and will band together to create the greatest political force in the history of our nation. The first step in the restoration of their birthright and the revival of the American dream: Project FREE, to technologically innovate the next generation of energy.

Inventing the next source of energy is the single greatest thing we can do to change the world for the better. There is nothing more important to our society. It is the call and legacy of Generation We and will be the greatest achievement in the history of mankind.

In 1962, John F. Kennedy set the seemingly impossible goal of sending a man to the moon and returning him safely to Earth within a decade. Kennedy said:

We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.

Kennedy was taking a page from the playbook of World War II. Like the Apollo moon-landing project, the Manhattan Project was a seemingly audacious technological challenge that an earlier generation of Americans had met, keeping us free by developing atomic weapons just months ahead of our Nazi enemies.

Today, an equally bold vision is required. We must immediately implement an Apollo- or Manhattan-like project to invent new sources of nonfossil fuel energy free from carbon emissions, based on hydrogen, fusion, or other means.

The ultimate goal of this effort will be to take Americans “off the grid”—to free us from dependence on one or a few centralized sources of energy and instead to generate most energy at the point of need, without having to be wired. The goal is to create a power source generated within the place of consumption—the car, home, business, or factory. This will liberate us from the limiting factors introduced by long-distance transmission, which is an impediment to large-scale implementation of clean energy, such as wind and solar, and getting it into large markets quickly.

We call it Project FREE, because the four letters that spell the word serve as a handy reminder of the benefits the project will provide if successfully completed:



**F stands for FREEDOM FROM ENERGY WARS**

Freedom from dependence on foreign sources of energy that threaten to embroil us in wars and conflicts that could put our security and our future in peril.



**R stands for RIGHT TO AFFORDABLE, CLEAN ENERGY**

The right of every American, and ultimately, every person on the planet to affordable and clean energy.



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**Inventing the next source of energy is the single greatest thing we can do to change the world for the better.**



## E stands for **ECONOMIC GROWTH**

The incredible boon to global productivity, financial savings, and wealth creation that will be sparked by the discovery of a permanent form of cheap, renewable energy and the infrastructure to support it, not to mention the industries it will create and re-create.



## E stands for **ENVIRONMENTAL RENEWAL**

Renewal and preservation of our natural environment and a sustainable future for our planet, which will result from an end to the burning of fossil fuels and carbon emissions.

Project FREE is not incremental technology, formed to improve the 100-plus-year-old coal, gas, and oil platforms we use today. Instead, we will seek radical innovations that can completely free us from foreign oil dependence and the conflict, environmental damage, and economic weakness it fosters. Conservation and improved use of current technologies are necessary but insufficient to create a future that takes mankind into its next epoch.

Project FREE must be a national program driven by the president, headed by an official with cabinet-level authority, endowed with 30 to 40 billion dollars in spending authority per year, and like the Federal Reserve, independent of partisan machinations. The mandate: to invent our way out of our energy dilemma within the next 10 to 15 years.

Forty billion dollars may sound like a lot of money, but it barely equals one year's worth of profit earned by a single multinational oil company. (In 2007, ExxonMobil posted record annual profits of 40.61 billion dollars after taxes. They made 80 billion dollars in profit before taxes, an amount equal to almost 1,300 dollars *per second*.<sup>1</sup>)

The budget of Project FREE is also dwarfed by the obscene sums already committed to the war in Iraq (a war driven largely by the desire to ensure the continued flow of oil from Iraq's vast reserves) and the huge amounts we are currently sending overseas in exchange for foreign oil. In 2006, for example, the United States sent about 280 billion dollars to foreign oil producers—around a thousand dollars for each man, woman, and child in the country.<sup>2</sup> At that time, the average cost of oil was less than 70 dollars a barrel. As of this writing—just two years later—oil costs over 140 dollars a barrel, more than twice as much. With this gigantic

and steadily growing drain on our national resources, no wonder our economy is floundering—and no wonder more and more Americans are recognizing the urgency of the need for energy independence.

There are two important points to note. First, Project FREE should be established with powers akin to those granted high-priority wartime programs, so as to remove all clearance and cooperation impediments that might otherwise slow or stop its progress.

Second, it should be temporary, as permanent bureaucracies tend to become special interests, intent on prolonging their own existence rather than on getting the job completed. The legislation creating the project must mandate its dismantling either upon fulfillment of its commission or after 15 years have passed, whichever comes first. Just as built-in deadlines existed for both the Manhattan Project (finish the bomb before the Nazis do) and the Apollo Project (to land a man on the moon “before this decade [the 60s] is out”), there should be a deadline for Project FREE.

It has been a long time since America has heard a rallying cry to launch an extraordinary effort to achieve the seemingly impossible. Today, with our nation’s greatness apparently in decline and with our people divided by partisan rancor and social discord, it would benefit the nation enormously if we could join forces to pursue an important and truly valuable goal.

We have so many neglected priorities that several such projects can easily be identified. But there is no other project so important to our economic and military security.

It’s vitally important for Project FREE to be done right. It will need to be headed by a visionary public official with a broad understanding of technology, government experience, and a creative mindset. He or she must be given the visibility and clout needed to overcome the efforts of special interests to impede the solution of our energy crisis. Imagine where the world would be if microprocessor technology had remained unchanged for more than a hundred years. That is precisely what has happened with oil, gas, and coal. We cannot afford to let these special interests control our energy policies any longer.

Of course, there are downsides to any government program, of which we, as advocates of free markets, are well aware. But Project FREE is the kind of challenge that private enterprise alone can’t meet. The new technologies to be pursued under its auspices can’t guarantee any commercial return in the short run, which means that businesses cannot invest in them because of their inherent risk and unknown commercial prospects. Only government is positioned to address this issue.

The challenges facing Project FREE will be great. Unlike the Manhattan or Apollo projects, the scientists and engineers involved will not be pursuing a single solution to a single challenge but rather exploring an array of innovations with one shared objective—to reduce America’s dependence on fossil fuels.

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## OIL MONEY

**In 2006, the US sent 280 BILLION dollars to foreign oil producers which equals a thousand dollars for each person in the country.**

**The cost of oil has doubled in 2 years from 70 dollars a barrel to 140.**

**In 2007, ExxonMobil made annual profits of 40.61 BILLION dollars after taxes.**

SOURCE: SANDALOW, FREEDOM FROM OIL, CNN/MONEY.COM

Some of these innovations will focus on the demand side, where there are huge opportunities for conservation and improved efficiency *without* any dramatic reduction in Americans' lifestyle. For example, plug-in electric cars—a technology that is available today—could meet the total transportation needs of 60 percent of American drivers using the unutilized nighttime generating capacity of existing power plants.<sup>3</sup> However, the advances that will be more significant in the long run will focus on the supply side, where one or more breakthroughs are needed to make nonfossil energy technologies more cost-effective.

Perhaps the most exciting possibilities include a commercially viable hydrogen-based energy program and energy from low-energy nuclear reactions, or fusion, the method of producing energy that takes place on the sun itself. The latter concept is one of 14 “Grand Challenges for Engineering” selected by the members of the National Academy of Engineering in February 2008, as top priorities for the twenty-first century. (Solar power and carbon sequestration also made the list.<sup>4</sup>) If we can achieve the breakthroughs needed to turn fusion power from dream into reality, we can transform the world economy for decades, perhaps centuries to come.

Once the scientific breakthroughs have been achieved, the work of Project FREE will not be done. A series of daunting engineering and economy challenges will still have to be met. Here is how physicist David J. Eaglesham, managing director for advanced technologies at Applied Materials and president of the Materials Research Society, explained these challenges in an article endorsing the idea of a large-scale Manhattan-style project to meet the energy crisis:

The [original] Manhattan Project required one device (or a few) that could be built as expense-is-no-object. Don't know of an efficient way to separate isotopes of uranium? Just go ahead and build enough accelerators to send a few kg of material round a mass spectrometer. Energy is different. We don't need *one* of anything. We need 100 billion m<sup>2</sup> of photovoltaic systems, 10 billion solid-state lights, and a billion high-efficiency cars. And, most importantly, we'll need it all cheap.... So the Energy Manhattan will require not only an unprecedented international collaboration; it will require unprecedented coupling of the public and private sectors. It will call for simple and pragmatic approaches as well as visionary leaps. Getting industry involved could be simple (carbon credits, incentive schemes) or very complicated (joint government/industry projects), but the scale of the challenge makes it essential that we learn how to do it.<sup>5</sup>

Eaglesham is right; Project FREE will be the greatest technological challenge America has ever tackled. But it is also essential to our future. As Eaglesham goes on to say, “The solutions will be complex and multifaceted,

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# Manhattan Project Apollo Project Project FREE

and the programs unwieldy. But I think we have to take this challenge on because the alternative is too terrible to contemplate.”

Think back to the two historic projects to which we’ve compared Project FREE—the Manhattan and Apollo projects. Both were crash projects driven by national anxiety over looming threats: in the case of the Manhattan Project, the danger that the Nazis might beat us to the secret of atomic weaponry and use it to complete their mission of world conquest; in the case of the Apollo program, the fear that the Soviet Union would colonize space and use it as a new form of military “high ground” from which to launch missile attacks on the West.

Maybe it takes a life-or-death threat like these to mobilize a great national effort. We are at that point today. The combined dangers we now face from global warming, dependence on totalitarian regimes for fossil fuels, and the risks of war for control of the world’s energy supplies are at least as great as the dangers that prompted those earlier national triumphs.

As you can imagine, getting us off the grid will be a revolutionary step that will drastically reduce the influence of powerful special interests that currently wield enormous clout in Washington and around the world—not just the oil barons and the overseas potentates who control the great fossil fuel reserves but also the utility companies, the oil refiners, and the agribusiness conglomerates currently pushing ethanol (which is, at best, an inadequate half-measure).

This is another reason why Project FREE *must* be a government-sponsored program. Only a project that is independent of today’s most powerful energy companies can be free to think outside the box of current technology. Optimizing today’s century-old technologies will take us only so far. It’s time to look for brand-new solutions. That will be the ultimate mandate of Project FREE.

If Project FREE is successful, the potential benefits are so great they are almost incalculable. Having one or more new, clean energy sources to power growth in our nation and the world over the next century will:



- ▶ Produce millions of new jobs—some directly, in the new energy industry itself; others indirectly, in the new businesses made possible by the availability of an abundant, reliable source of clean new energy.



- ▶ Dramatically reduce the environmental damage caused by carbon emissions and make it possible for us to slow or even reverse the danger of global warming.

- Free the United States from its current dependence for energy on unreliable, often hostile foreign regimes.



- Stimulate history's greatest-ever economic boom, fueling innovation, entrepreneurship, and business expansion.



- Produce a “positive domino effect” by unleashing the power of cheap energy to solve many other problems—for example, by making the current costly technology of desalination affordable and thereby making safe water available to all. This is perhaps the most outstanding humanitarian achievement of the project. It can effectively end starvation, turn deserts into oases, and make large-scale sustainable agriculture a global reality.



- Dramatically reduce the likelihood of wars over resources, defusing the economic tensions that profoundly complicate the already challenging task of forging peace in regions of the world such as the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and Chechnya. People will be so busy industrializing, making money, and rebuilding infrastructure, they will have no desire to fight over resources.



You can get a sense of the seriousness of today's interwoven energy/climate crises by noting the fact that many politicians from both parties—people not normally known as profiles in courage—have been willing to express support for the idea of a vast, costly, and difficult Apollo-style project for energy. Notable political figures who have endorsed the concept include Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Newt Gingrich, Mitt Romney, Rudy Giuliani, and Lamar Alexander. Leaders from industry, academia, and the sciences have also signed on.

Does this mean Project FREE is a done deal—that it will surely be part of the agenda of the next president? Unfortunately, no. We've all seen how other worthwhile initiatives—projects that “everyone” agrees are important and necessary—have gotten sidetracked, delayed, distorted, and ultimately killed by political timidity, interference by special-interest lobbyists, budgetary constraints, and public indifference. Think about all the efforts over the years to fix our healthcare system, put Social Security and Medicare on a firm financial footings, or reform our immigration and

border security programs. In every case, smart, well-meaning people have put forward plans that made sense, only to see them scuttled and abandoned. Under “politics as usual,” it’s all too likely the exact same thing will happen to Project FREE.

That’s why it’s essential that today’s most important rising political force, Generation We, must choose *not* to let “politics as usual” carry the day.

During the turmoil of the late 1960s, in the midst of nationwide struggles over civil rights and the war in Vietnam, legendary independent journalist I. F. Stone taught an important lesson about how politics works:

There is a wonderful story of a delegation which came here [to Washington, D.C.] to see Franklin D. Roosevelt on some reform or other. When they were finished the President said, “Okay, you’ve convinced me. Now go on out and bring pressure on me.” Every thoughtful official knows how hard it is to get anything done if someone isn’t making it uncomfortable *not* to. Just imagine how helpless the better people in government would be if the rebels, black and white, suddenly fell silent.<sup>6</sup>

Like the late 1960s, these early years of the twenty-first century are no time for us to fall silent. We need to mobilize to keep up the pressure on our public officials to do the right thing.

Project FREE must be the great cause around which the Millennial generation can rally. Like Generation We itself, it is “post-ideological”—“liberal” because it will help save our environment, “conservative” because it strengthens our national security, a potential source of pride and (not incidentally) tremendous economic riches for the entire nation. It calls for cooperation between all of the most powerful and effective institutions of our society—government, business, academia—and its benefits will flow to everyone, not just in the United States but around the planet.

It is not directed *against* anyone but rather *for* everyone—young and old, rich and poor, black and white, urban and rural, women and men. Thus it has the power to inspire and unite our people, and to return the United States to its place as the most admired nation in the world.

Generation We is ready to rally around Project FREE, as shown by multiple findings from our surveys. Ninety-four percent of those in the GMS agreed with the statement, *Our country must take extreme measures now, before it is too late, to protect the environment and begin to reverse the damage we have done.* Seventy-four percent agreed that *We must make major investments now to innovate the next generation of nonfossil fuel based energy solutions.* And as we’ve already noted, seventy percent rated



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“very effective” the idea that America should *Launch a concerted national effort, similar to the Apollo Program that put a man on the moon, with the goal of moving America beyond fossil fuels and inventing the next generation of energy, based on new technologies such as hydrogen or fusion.*

Project FREE is an ambitious, challenging concept. But except for the opposition it will attract from entrenched interests, it is *not* controversial. It will be eagerly supported by tens of millions of Millennials, the greatest power bloc of the next several decades.

Whichever political party espouses, leads, and successfully implements Project FREE will be an enormous benefactor to America and the world. It will also seize the moral and political high ground from which to command the allegiance of Generation We for decades to come. The fact that it is based on clear, nonpolitical objectives and a deadline makes the future of Generation We, and their children, something to look forward to rather than something to fear.

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## THE REST OF THE AGENDA

There are other major projects for creating America’s future that also need and deserve investment during the next generational cycle. Some require literal investment—financial commitments by both the government and the private sector. Others require investment of social and political capital. Here is our list of important items for the Millennial generation to consider when shaping its agenda:

- Restoring and protecting the environment and the planet—not only through the innovations that Project FREE will provide, but also through fair, firm, market-based rules and systems that will reduce air and water pollution, incentivize and reward clean technologies, and protect the natural diversity of species and ecosystems that represents one of our most precious legacies to future generations.



- Providing quality nutrition and healthcare for all—replacing America’s jerry-rigged healthcare system (which channels profits and benefits mainly to the owners of for-profit insurance companies and healthcare providers) and its industrial food supply system (which encourages obesity and chronic illness) with a medical system that covers the basic healthcare needs of every American and encourages preventive care, along with a reformed, sustainable agricultural system that provides affordable access to natural, healthful foods.





- ▶ Providing quality education to people of every background—eliminating the class, racial, and geographic disparities that offer high-quality schooling only to members of a narrow elite while condemning millions of young people to an education that does not prepare them for the job challenges and creative opportunities of the twenty-first century.



- ▶ Balancing the national budget and eliminating the national debt—returning to fiscal prudence by ensuring that every new spending program is realistically and fairly funded, eliminating corporate tax loopholes and subsidies, simplifying taxation and making it fair and able to fund our expenditures and debt retirement, and reducing defense spending to levels that protect our nation against genuine threats without needlessly lining the pockets of arms contractors and mercenaries.



- ▶ Restructuring and fully funding Social Security and other crucial entitlements—making the (relatively minor) adjustments in tax rates and retirement ages that are needed to put Social Security on a sound financial footing for the next century, and implementing strong and immediate measures (as part of a broader program of healthcare reform) to manage the out-of-control growth of Medicare spending without reducing the access of seniors to essential healthcare services.



- ▶ Eliminating structural trade imbalances, rebuilding the industrial base, and restoring job security—a multipart program that includes investing in modern manufacturing technologies; improving job training and education for young people who don't go on to college; making sure that free trade policies and treaties ensure a level playing field between countries, fair treatment of workers, and environmental protection; and eliminating tax incentives that encourage U.S. companies to ship jobs and hide earnings overseas.



- ▶ Developing and implementing a sustainable strategy for planetary economic development—helping the developing nations of the world escape poverty through market-based programs such as microcredit and social business; provision of appropriate technologies for improving local economies (rather than vast, ill-conceived industrialization schemes); and support for health and social programs that will dramatically reduce the toll of infectious diseases, infant and maternal mortality, and lack of education.

- Restore America’s industrial and manufacturing capacity so it can be self-sufficient in times of conflict and not held hostage to other nations that produce crucial products or components. (Our current dependence on Asia for virtually all electronic parts could spell disaster in the event of conflict with China.) This would also go a long way toward restoring the middle-class expectation of high-skilled jobs and fair pay.



- Restoring civil rights, freedom of expression, and individual privacy—insisting that government officials operate strictly according to the provisions of the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights; rolling back the authoritarian practices instituted since 9/11 under cover of the “war on terror,” including repealing the Patriot Act; creating clear and enforceable regulations governing how corporations and government agencies can gather and use personal information about citizens; and reinvigorating and enforcing antitrust laws and other regulations designed to discourage excessive concentration of media power in the hands of a few companies or individuals.



Maybe you have a few other items you would like to add to this list. That’s great. Our goal here is to prime the pump—to start a national conversation, especially among Millennials themselves, about where we want to take our nation and the world. We are proposing an agenda—a list of items for discussion—not a plan. It is up to you, and every concerned citizen, to take part in shaping the strategy.

Maybe you think some of the goals we’ve listed here are too ambitious—that we are being unrealistic in our dreams for the future. You may be right. But history shows that the human capacity to achieve great things is far greater than we normally realize.

One of today’s great world heroes is Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, pioneer of microcredit and winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to alleviate poverty. Here is part of what Yunus said in his Nobel Prize lecture:

We get what we want, or what we don’t refuse. We accept the fact that we will always have poor people around us, and that poverty is part of human destiny. This is precisely why we continue to have poor people around us. If we firmly believed that poverty is unacceptable to us, and that it should not belong to a civilized society, we would have built appropriate institutions and policies to create a poverty-free world.

We wanted to go to the moon, so we went there. We achieve what we want to achieve. If we are not achieving something, it is because we have not put our minds to it. We create what we want.

What we want and how we get to it depends on our mindsets. It is extremely difficult to change mindsets once they are formed. We create the world in accordance with our mindset. We need to invent ways to change our perspective continually and reconfigure our mindset quickly as new knowledge emerges. We can reconfigure our world if we can reconfigure our mindset.<sup>7</sup>

**We are proposing an agenda—a list of items for discussion—not a plan. It is up to you, and every concerned citizen, to take part in shaping the strategy.**

Yunus is right. As a society, we get what we want—or at least, what we set our hearts on achieving. Right now, we have a world run by plunderers, focused solely on individual material gain, and headed toward destruction through war, disease, or environmental catastrophe. But all these problems are the results of human action or inaction—and all can be solved if we put our minds to it.

## DEFENDING THE MILLENNIAL AGENDA

Right-wing, special-interest, and corporate opponents of the Millennial agenda will employ their usual tactics to attack those who support it. They will say, “We live in a dangerous world”; they will label those who oppose needless wars as “wimps,” “cowards,” “traitors,” and “surrender advocates”; and they will insist that only a totalitarian government focused on war-making can protect Americans from external threats.

These are lies that must be labeled as such. History shows that, when American values of democracy and freedom have been truly threatened, the successful battles to defend those values have been led and won not by tough-talking right-wing reactionaries, but by progressives. It is the freedom-lovers who win our wars—not the freedom-haters.

America’s victorious involvement in World War I was led by the progressive president Woodrow Wilson. (If Wilson’s brainchild, the League of Nations, had been supported vigorously after the war, it’s possible that World War II might have been prevented.) America’s triumph in World War II was led by the progressive president Franklin D. Roosevelt. (It was Roosevelt and his progressive successor Harry S. Truman who guided the creation of the international institutions, from NATO to the United Nations, that helped prevent the outbreak of a third world war.) Even the Cold War, which was waged by politicians of both parties, was managed with the greatest wisdom by progressive presidents like John F. Kennedy, whose strength and forbearance during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 arguably helped prevent the thermonuclear destruction of the world.

By contrast, the “tough guys” of the extreme right are experts at bluster, unilateral saber-rattling, and ill-considered military actions that kill thousands and ultimately end up weakening America’s position in the world, as exemplified by the current war in Iraq. The progressives of Generation We will need to lead a clean break from this kind of mindless

“toughness” in favor of a deeper understanding of what it *really* takes to maintain the freedom and safety of our nation and our planet.

True bravery comes when the spirit of a nation resists evil and faces its greatest challenges with resolve and optimism. The accusations of cowardice often come from pundits, politicians, and special-interest advocates who are devoid of any personal bravery. They are so wedded to their own dogma or self-serving interests they do not have the courage to open their minds and admit there may be a better way.

True toughness is the spirit showed by Martin Luther King, Jr., in facing down the hate-mongers to create a civil rights movement that ultimately claimed his life. It was the bedrock of a handicapped FDR who, in one of our nation’s darkest hours, famously declared, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” It was the Spirit of 1776—the readiness to face a terrible threat without fear and keeping the resolve to fight until victory is won.

The most important battles to be fought and won in the years to come are not just military battles against foreign aggressors—although, as history shows, progressive leaders will wage such wars with courage and determination if and when they are necessary. The *real* battles the future is calling on us to wage are against oppression, tyranny, manipulation, exploitation, and cruelty. The biggest enemies are not tin-pot dictators in faraway lands or terrorists crafting squalid schemes for murdering innocents—although progressive leaders understand and will deal with the threats both of these groups can pose. The *real* enemies are the plunderers who exploit jingoism, machismo, fear, and anger to seize and maintain power for their own selfish ends.

The greatest battles Generation We will be called upon to wage will be mental battles—disputes to free their own minds and spirits of the shackles of false consciousness imposed by our manipulators. The kind of toughness they need will be the Spirit of 1776—the chutzpah that was in our ancestors when they shook off tyranny, saying to their British overlords, “Enough!”

Surely military strength and battles will be necessary. But the toughest battles will call for heroic resolve to create a new style and method of achieving solutions, and to stay the course no matter how difficult the road. This battle calls for the same bravery and resolve our founders expressed. Today’s youth are called to say “Enough!” to the older generation and the oligopolistic business/government power structure, peacefully asserting their own interests and those of the nation and forcing change through the existing political process.

They can follow no better spiritual guide than George Washington himself, a hero for the ages—steadfast in purpose, a courageous freedom fighter, and the man who turned down the offer to become the American monarch and instead insisted on democracy.





## FINDING OUR VOICES

Part of the challenge Generation We will face is finding their own voices and the boldness to defend their own interests loudly and clearly. There's no doubt that tackling all of the items on the proposed Millennial agenda successfully will be a tall order. Generation We faces a list of challenges perhaps as great as that faced by any generation of Americans.

We've written elsewhere in this book about the change in the past generation whereby ownership and control of the media has passed into the hands of giant corporations whose interests run directly counter to those of Generation We—and in fact, to those of the vast majority of citizens. Part of the solution must involve returning to the media

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regulatory structure that existed in the United States prior to the Reagan administration, under which the ownership of mass media distribution systems had to be separate from content creation. This system, while far from perfect, at least created a modicum of independence among those who reported and wrote the news, as well as those who created entertainment and information content for most Americans.

An important intermediate step may be the creation of a media organization run by and for Millennial youth. This could include a wire service to create and distribute news content; a television news network analogous to and competing with CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News; and a network of Internet sites to encourage young people to create and share their own information.

Most daunting is the fact that if Generation We is to tackle massive social problems effectively, they will need to envision and then implement a major restructuring of our economic and political systems, so the inherent creativity of all people can be unleashed. Just as the reforms of the Jacksonian and Progressive eras produced new opportunities for working- and middle-class people to participate in the political and economic system, and as the twentieth-century human rights movement brought similar opportunities to women, religious and ethnic minorities, and people of color, so Generation We must find ways to free twenty-first century America from the control of plundering economic and political elites, liberating the innovative powers of our whole nation. Only in this way can the huge problems we face be solved.

Fortunately for our nation and the world, Generation We has what it will take to meet the enormous challenges of tomorrow. Resilient, optimistic, well-educated, thoughtful, generous, open-minded, and practical, they have the potential to be the next “greatest generation” in American history. They are all about the greater good. When they are finished making their mark (40 to 60 years from now), there is every reason to believe they will leave the planet a very different place—and a much better one.

## AN EMPOWERING VISION OF THE FUTURE

The urgent need to invest in our future is more than just another way of defining the Millennial agenda. It's also a vitally important antidote to the onslaught of negativity, pessimism, and apocalyptic thinking that dominates the conservative, corporate media—especially on those rare occasions when they attempt to glimpse the future.

There's no doubt we live in an era of accelerating crises—political, economic, environmental, biological, social, and spiritual. But there is a positive vision for the future we can offer the world, showing what our planet can be like once we confront and seize control of these crises and use them to reverse the destructive course we've been on. It's a vision that incorporates the best traditions of Western civilization even as it embraces the need for dramatic change and revitalization in the face of unprecedented challenges.

Sociologist Paul Ray, whose work we cited earlier in our discussion of the “cultural creatives,” has written insightfully about the kind of new vision that is essential to inspire the change we seek. In one essay, Ray describes “the Wisdom needed for our time” in terms of opposed dualities. According to Ray, the Wisdom our world needs includes:

The *wise elder's* long-term perspectives and reasoning: what is good for *all* the children? *Not* short-term, immature, selfish, greedy, power-mad perspectives and reasoning.

Linking future-oriented perspectives and concerns to our deep collective past, and drawing from its themes for legitimacy. *Not* just focused on our shallow past and present to the exclusion of our evolution into the future.

Showing maximally inclusive concerns across all kinds of people and all species, for humans and nature alike. *Not* narrowly focused on particular tribes, traditions, or humanity only, and not exclusion, or ignorance, of nature.

Linking spiritual realization and concerns to practical action to the needs of “the planet and the people and species on it.” *Not* otherworldly, abstruse, or lacking relationship to people's real concerns in their “life worlds,” and in their ecologies.

Placing crucial emphasis on the growth and transformation of both persons and the culture, both organizations and life worlds, both spirit and civilization, both local and planetary. *Not* static ideals, not moral absolutes lacking reference to human growth/transformation; and not focused just on individual change, lacking reference to cultural change issues.

Concerns of the elders of humanity for the well-being of *all* the children of the world, now and in the longer term fu-

*“What's the use of a fine house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?”*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

resilient  
open-minded  
generous  
well-educated  
practical

ture. Not excluding anyone, not immature in the manner of the adolescent consciousness typical of humanity today.<sup>8</sup>

Ray's vision of a planetary "wisdom civilization" is one we think today's Millennials are ready to respond to and work toward. It's just one version of the kind of overarching vision we need to inspire and empower young people and those who would support them—a vision that embraces and transcends individual agenda items and embodies long-term goals far greater than any checklist of particular political or economic projects, no matter how ambitious.

It's also a vision that embraces the need for personal sacrifice—not in a mood of joyless self-denial or rejection of pleasure, but out of a desire to transcend the petty and the purely personal in favor of bigger, broader social goals.

Many commentators have decried the narrow and selfish perspective of the Bush administration, and more broadly, the conservative power structure currently ruling the United States. Noted particularly is its failure to call for any personal contribution to the supposedly epochal "war on terror" other than urging Americans to "borrow money and go shopping"; its insistence on massive tax cuts even as overseas wars are draining the treasury and incurring enormous future debts; and its willful blindness to the need for long-term thinking about the energy and environmental crises in favor of short-term fixes such as drilling for oil in the Alaskan wilderness.

Generation We rejects this kind of petty, self-centered thinking and are ready to embrace the need for dramatic personal and social efforts in support of worthwhile goals. In the GMS, 78 percent of the Millennials we surveyed agreed with the statement, *I am willing to personally make significant sacrifices in my own life to address the major environmental, economic, and security challenges facing our country*, and fully 91 percent agreed that *In our country, each generation has a responsibility to wisely use the country's resources and power so that they can provide the next generation a secure, sustainable country that is stronger than the one they inherited*.

Clearly the sense of responsibility and personal mission is already in place. All that's lacking is the vision, the will, and the leadership.

*"Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition."*

THOMAS JEFFERSON

# Q70

**Now let's look at some potential solutions for some of the major challenges facing our country today. For each, please tell us how effective you feel each of the following would be in addressing that issue, on a scale of 0-10, where 10 means it would be extremely effective in addressing that challenge and 0 means would not be at all effective.**

*You can choose any number between 0 and 10 – the higher the number, the more effective you feel the solution would be in addressing that issue.*

	Mean	10	8-10	6-10	0-5	DK/Ref
Launch a concerted national effort, similar to the Apollo Program that put a man on the moon, with the goal of moving America beyond fossil fuels and inventing the next generation of energy, based on new technologies such as hydrogen or fusion. This aggressive plan would require a huge national investment but would produce millions of new jobs, could dramatically reduce environmental damage, and free us from our dependence on fossil fuels and foreign oil.	7.0	21	49	71	29	0
Commit ourselves to a comprehensive effort to not only reduce the pollution we are putting into the environment but reverse the damage we have done. That damage is not only polluting the earth, it is causing unprecedented disease and suffering in communities throughout our country and across the globe.	6.9	20	46	69	30	0
Provide quality healthcare and nutrition for all children in our country, regardless of their financial condition. Poor nutrition is creating an epidemic of preventable chronic diseases, including diabetes and obesity, that will cost our country billions of dollars and ruin the lives of millions of children.	7.3	29	53	75	25	.
Provide equal funding for public education and learning resources for all children and all communities, regardless of economic class. This is a critical investment in the human potential of our country and its ability to compete in a global economy.	7.2	27	53	73	27	0
Balance the federal budget, but also eliminate the 8 trillion dollars of national debt that have been built up over decades of irresponsible spending. This debt makes it impossible for our country to keep pace and leaves us indebted to other countries who are potential competitors.	6.8	16	43	69	31	0
Fully fund Social Security, Medicare, and other social insurance commitments being passed on to future generations, which have doubled to over 40 trillion dollars just since 2000 and are increasing by several trillion every year. These commitments must be met by current generations because it would be morally wrong to pass on unfunded liabilities of this size to our own children.	6.7	17	43	66	33	0
End trade imbalances that see us importing nearly 1 trillion dollars per year more than we export to other countries by restoring our industrial base. Restoring our industrial base and eliminating our trade deficit will provide secure jobs with good wages and benefits and rebuild our shrinking middle class.	6.6	16	39	66	33	0
Begin to rebuild America's economic self-sufficiency by restoring our industrial base to provide the essential components needed to provide for our defense and basic economic needs. As we have seen with oil, we can no longer afford to rely on other countries for our most vital economic and security needs.	6.8	16	41	70	30	0
Protect our civil rights by reversing recent actions to restrict our right to privacy and to limit access to government information, ensuring survival of a free and unrestricted Internet, and restoring an objective, unbiased media. Protecting our civil rights also requires eliminating the influence of special interests over our government and creating more transparency in government and business.	6.6	17	40	65	35	0