

When at the cliff edge, take a big step forward

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Abstract

We reflect on the “great unravelling” from the vantage point of being in our 50s, noting how different this is to the vantage point of younger generations. Characterizing this moment as being at the proverbial cliff edge, we explore what to do there. What to do with our fear, and – inspired by the young ones - seizing the possibility to change everything by taking a big step over the edge.

Keywords: destructive energies, revelation, rite of passage

The young ones spent a night under the stars, fasting, each silently finding their today-truth. When they came back, they wove their individual insights into a collective message:

We are the song people who have heard the rumbling of the sky, invited the darkness, and nested in its embrace.

Through the lessons of the land, we encountered grief, joy, and life.

We weave laughter, music, and stories into medicine.

We bend lines into circles.

What about our privileges? Our certainties? We stay with the discomfort.

Owning our colours, greatest fears and dreams, on the edge of the cliff we are the ones who reach out our hand, hold each other as we jump. We are life moving, and life is moving us.

[Rise and Regenerate & Rite de Passage / Rage, Essertfallon Switzerland, 5 September 2024].

And what about us? Two post-menopausal humans in love. While perhaps only beginning to truly blossom into our fullness, we are certainly not young ones in the prime of life yet burdened with failing SDGs and eco-anxiety, racing beyond a 1.5-degree temperature rise. How do we, in our 50s, respond to the great unravelling?

We watch the quickening of destructive energies. How a man with a bad haircut but enormous influence – and who is known to lie, rape, cheat, and corrupt - is joining forces with another man of even more enormous influence and disturbing principles who owns Space-X. How the financial markets are busy turning fossil fuel into an increasingly attractive investment. How Israel continues to flatten hospitals, orphanages, and family

homes in ever-widening circles of destruction, and how the world continues to turn a blind eye to the devastation in Sudan. One of us is grieving the killing of dozens of birch trees – felled for the most myopic of reasons – with whom they have been in conversation their whole life. The other is mutely observing while a pristine wetland, full of chorusing frogs, is gouged open by yellow machines so that a too-large private home can be built there.

This quickening of destructive energies will take us to the cliff edge faster than we had previously feared. And yet, maybe that is the only way. Once there, we hope that instead of clinging to the cliff, instead of pushing others over to save ourselves, that we will have the presence of mind to take a big step forward. Holding hands. Maybe singing. Because that big step over the edge is the only way to escape these destructive energies, the only way to shed the linear ways of thinking and being that got us to this cliff.

The great unravelling is not a process. It is a revelation. Once you see it, you are changed. You are in or you are out. This means changing our relationship with fear, with the notion of risk, with each other. We are life moving, and life is moving us.

We don't know what happens when we leap. It might be a long free-fall. It might be the end. Or it might be a threshold. An initiation. A leap of life. Regardless, it requires some falling. There's reason to be afraid. What happens when we stay with the fear? Even befriend fear? Knowing that something in us needs to die to cross this edge into the forever-becoming-into-who-we-are.

About the author

Rebecca is a dialogue facilitator. She researches, teaches, facilitates, and writes about bringing people from vastly different life experiences into dialogue and collaboration. As a senior consultant with Reos Partners (Africa office), she works on issues such as dismantling structural racism, preventing gender-based violence, decolonising global civil society, and navigating organisational culture change. She leads Reos Africa's work in fragile and conflict affected contexts.

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