

# Evolutionary Leadership



“What’s the single most important thing young entrepreneurs can do for future success?” That’s a question I often get asked when I’m promoting clean money at business schools or incubators.

My answer is always: “Learn inner skills.”

Cultivating insight and mastery of yourself is the secret of a successful life. You can know all the mechanics and necessities of business, but if you skip learning how to handle conflict, how to understand your own feelings, and how to be in relationship, you will likely wreak havoc. You might succeed financially, but you may die unhappy and leave a tainted legacy. Financial success and power can have big value, but there is much more to life than that. We must be successful as human beings.

As children we absorb habits, behaviors, and assumptions from our parents and siblings. We endure later struggles and even traumas—everything from broken relationships and hurt feelings to personal failures and violent assaults. As has been well articulated by addictions specialist Dr. Gabor Mate, these ingrained patterns leave scars that affect how we respond to the world. Our negative experiences can leave us wounded and perpetually recreating what was familiar. That can mean abusing and wounding others in the process.

Our careers can also work against us. Menial labor and poor industrial work conditions can damage the body and undermine creative potential and self-determination. In the white-collar world we can suffer stress and damage to our family life and emotional

well-being. Self-employment and entrepreneurship can bring yet larger pressures—the anxiety of scrambling for the next client, seeing others as means rather than ends, and breeding a winner-take-all aggressiveness that ultimately damages us. We can win the race for money, and find ourselves unhappy, lonely, and alienated.

More enlightened states—compassion, joy, honesty, self-esteem—are at risk. Even the most fortunate of us face realities that can confuse and distort. Vexing challenges greet us throughout life. Strong as our Western culture is on intellect and ambition, it is proportionally weak in delivering good skills for thriving relationships, balanced power dynamics, crisis management, emotional health, and peace. We lose what Martin Prechtel has called “the honey in our hearts.” Addictions to food, alcohol, sex, and work are pervasive.

It’s impossible to keep personal issues and damage from showing up in our careers and relationships. Our psychological and emotional selves tag along in our business, financial, and political lives. We then learn leadership on top of a base of accumulated, unresolved personal experiences—navigating mostly alone, or through random good luck with a wise mentor or friend along the way. Mass media is a dubious teacher.

Money is the sly foil, the crass seducer. It can lure us further from the sacred into the profane—and lead us into making it a deity or a religion. An obsession with growing and clinging to money can damage us and those we love. We need self-awareness and spiritual grounding for safe, healthy engagement with this kryptonite-like substance.

Money is embodied energy. It’s a tool. Making it into a god is tragic. Using it with a divine intention to help others is wonderful.

Without some inner guidance to steer by, lust for wealth can become the meaning and purpose of life. The clean money revolution is about causing less harm and doing more good. It is also about cleaning up our relationship with money. That means learning how to notice, acknowledge, and address our own inner damage. Maintaining a mental block about the mischief our money is doing—to whom and what, right now, on our behalf—is a corrupt morality.

What will our descendants think of our choices? What will we tell our children when they ask: “Didn’t you know that you made your money investing in climate change and injustice?” They may suffer knowing you had choices you ignored. Do they need money and power, or do they need our inspiration as role models who show us good pathways to fulfilling opportunity? They may want both, but without the latter, they may be spiritually empty and aimless.

A friend shared a story. Her family was visiting a Buddhist monastery in Burma. Her teenage son asked the teacher why he was a monk. His reply, paraphrased: “I wanted a life where I never had to think about or engage with money.”

Why would someone go so far into spiritual practice simply to have a life free of thinking about money? Where do we learn to navigate the clever seductions of wealth while keeping our integrity and balance—and to heal and restore from inner life damage? Where are the roots that grow our self-esteem confusion into “money lust disorder”? How do we unwind the knot of pain that ambition and greed medicates for us?

There are many wise people we can turn to as resources in finding our center. I’ve been blessed with exposure to so many teachers and spiritual guides who demonstrate that inner skills can be learned and enhanced with intention: David Abram, Stephen Aung, Ysaye Barnwell, Joan Borysenko, Caroline Casey, Charles Eisenstein, Kim Eng, Robert Gass, Casey Gerald, Margie Gillis, Lori Hanau, Roshi Joan Halifax, Roshi Reta Lawler, Joanna Macy, Atum O’Kane, Jill Purce, Gibran Rivera, Gordy Ryan, Tami Simon, Sobonfu Some, Dr. Michael Stone.

As we challenge our preconceptions, shine light on blind spots, and stretch our emotional comfort zones, we will activate our spirits toward honorable, satisfying mastery. We can leave legacies we’ll be proud of.

## A Hidden Network

After the '60s, organized protest against war and for civil rights fed into the back-to-the-land movement and rising demands for clean food, clean air, clean water. That heady time was later overcome by the Reagan era of the '80s, which unleashed a tidal wave of greed and selfishness.

Yet beneath these dominant cultural trends, a progressive moral and spiritual impulse in North America has been quietly tended by enduring leadership and consciousness centers—place-based organizations cultivating personal depth as the essential ground for social and cultural change. I think of venerable institutions like the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee (founded in 1932), Green Gulch Zen Center in Marin County (1962), Esalen in Big Sur (1962), Findhorn in Scotland (also 1962!), Omega Institute in Upstate New York (1972), and Hollyhock in British Columbia (1982). An important, more recent addition that brings inner and outer together is the Rockwood Institute in Oakland, founded in 2000. Burning Man, other intentional festival communities, modern-day “mystery schools,” and many other emerging practices are creating a vibrant global mix.

Centers like these, where leadership meets personal development, have formed a network of progressive values and inquiry—oases of reflection in a desert of self-interest. They offer a widening contribution to the inner lives of business leaders, change agents, creatives, people in the helping professions, and citizens across the socioeconomic spectrum. As consumerism and commercialization become ever more ubiquitous, they are essential to a sane future.

I was born to an entrepreneurial, ambitious, first-generation American father whose parents had emigrated from Russia. My mother, creative and career-centric, was the descendant of German Jews. I wanted to be strong and tough, like the male role models the world celebrated. Growing up in the Bible Belt under Jim Crow, and as an adolescent in the rebellious '60s—watching the “summer of love” and anti-establishment protests for civil rights and against the Vietnam War—I had many reasons to question authority and

the status quo around me. But through my twenties I was afraid to question myself. I was suspicious of therapy and self-examination. In retrospect, I had much inner conflict and confusion to explore: moderate depression, repressed anger, self-doubt, flailing for direction, endless vociferous opinions, and a sense of humor that was often at the expense of others.

My dad's model of toughing it out through all circumstances ultimately left him with a bereft emotional life. He had few close relationships or personal interests outside of business, and there were few people at his side when his kidneys failed. In lieu of inner work and community, he found his purpose in earning money, like many men of his generation. I'm very grateful that he left me a solid financial base. I wish I had learned more from him about being a good, whole man. I'm so grateful to my mother, whose inner struggles were more open. She sought help from therapy and feminist-inspired self-examination, and she seeded that possibility in me. When I faced big questions of purpose in the silence of nature at OrcaLab, I had few tools for facing vulnerabilities and unhappiness, but I did have some models if I was willing to look at them. Voracious reading and silence helped crack my shell. The symphony of the natural world and reading wise teachers and brilliantly insightful novelists reoriented my thinking and pushed me to deep self-reflection.

Over the next three decades, exposure to perennial wisdom, personal development, and the warrior-ship of an inner journey path was my greatest blessing. Hollyhock gave me that miracle.

### **Hollyhock Magic**

My experiences with communities at Farallones, Linnaea, OrcaLab, Threshold, and Social Venture Network all nourished my spirit and growth. Hollyhock became my soul home, where inner skills were the necessary root for true success and integrity. That understanding was my steady base from which to navigate worldly pursuits. Hollyhock's founders—including Rex Weyler, Shivon and Lee Robinson, Rick Ingrasci, Peggy Taylor, Charles Steinberg, and Torkin Wakefield—were the visionary mentors I learned from. I liked their

eclectic “no guru, no Bible, no path” approach that drew respectfully from diverse traditions and holistic perspectives.

The themes of Hollyhock work are *healing* to advance inner skills; *activism* to stand for what is important; and *generational responsibility* to balance business and purpose, respect ancestors and elders, and do our best for true security for the future. True security is about peace, fairness, and a soft landing.

Hollyhock’s origin history is as fascinating as the people who go there today. What we can deduce—from shell middens, culturally modified trees, reading, and many conversations—is that the land itself was used as an active summer gathering camp for First Nations bands from around the region, including the Klahoose, also based on Cortes Island. It is easy to imagine that the stunning location was a preferred destination for trading, winter food preparation, meetings, celebrations, sharing knowledge, and storytelling.

Hollyhock land was first “homesteaded” early in the 1900s by a man who had moved from the Finnish community of Sointula (“place of harmony”) on Malcolm Island—an initially utopian cooperative made up of immigrant Finnish miners. When the ferry and electricity linked Cortes Island to modern times in the mid 1970s, Richard Weaver bought the property and converted the old farm into a personal growth center called the Cold Mountain Institute. Weaver had trained at Esalen in Big Sur and was a brother-in-law of one of its founders. He wanted a remote and special spot to offer the work he felt was essential to the world.

When Richard died, his widow Jean Weaver put the land up for sale. Shiron Robinsong—with her husband Lee and their daughter Erin Skye—were helping caretake the property. Rex Weyler and Shiron had worked together at Greenpeace, and after a stint as an editor for *New Age Journal* in Boston, Rex came to visit Shiron on Cortes Island. She wanted to find a way to purchase the now-dilapidated facility—whose farmstead and “retreat center” buildings were being overgrown by blackberries and rainforest mold. The BC coast likes to eat buildings, cars, and infrastructure.



Rex has a great story of what happened next for him:

In the summer of 1981, I attended the Vancouver Folk Festival, as I had every year since it started. At midday, on one of the small stages, a group of seven women from Hungary performed astounding vocal harmonies. The oldest woman appeared about 70 and the youngest girl about 12. The other women ranged in height and age. This, I thought, is culture. The old woman was once the little girl. The little girl will one day lead this group as an elder. This is how real human culture works.

As the women sang rounds and chants and complex harmonies, the older woman, the leader, held out a brass pot before the crowd. “Cast your rings into the pot,” she declared. “Learn your fortune.” She walked from the stage, followed by the other women and girls, all singing, and wandered through the crowd, down to the edge of the pond. “Cast your rings into the pot. Cast your rings into the pot. Learn your fortune.” Stepping in among the bulrushes, the old Hungarian woman dipped the pot into the pond, took up some water, and led the procession back up toward the stage. People reached forward and placed their rings into the pot. Inspired by the performance, I caught up to the grandmother and cast my ring into the pot.

Back at the stage, the women still singing, the old woman pulled rings from the pot, one-by-one, handed them to the owners, and whispered a fortune to each person. When she drew out my ring, I stepped forward. She handed me the ring and whispered in my ear: “Red hollyhocks growing above the hedge. Look for them. They will be very important to you.”

Red hollyhocks? That’s my fortune? I mused over this for several weeks. At the end of that summer, I went to Cortes Island for the first time, with my friend Kim Bothen, to visit Lee and Shivon Robinsong, who had recently moved there.

We stayed at their home, walked in the woods, and I told them about my cryptic hollyhock fortune. The next morning, we took a long walk, south along the beach toward Sutil Point.

We passed an upland farm and came upon some abandoned buildings, a farmhouse and a cottage on the beach. “What’s this?” I asked. Shivon explained that the newer buildings were built by the former Cold Mountain Institute, a gestalt therapy center from the 1970s. The Institute had grown slightly famous in BC history as the site of early, cutting edge “encounter groups,” and humanistic psychology seminars. Now, a lone caretaker, Xanon by name, lived in the beach cottage.

I wanted to investigate, so we wandered up the hill into the main farmhouse and lodge. I had been working in Boston, still had a flat in Vancouver, but had considered leaving urban life for the bush. Only a few months earlier, on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, I had been working with the Lakota people, who had lost most of their land to colonizers, then lost most of their treaty land to swindlers. They lost children to residential schools, and were still fighting for basic human rights. At a gathering in the Black Hills, the traditional chief, Fools Crow, had thanked me for helping, but told me: “The best way to help the indigenous people, is to be one. Sooner or later, you must find a place, where you can stay, and you must protect that place.” After this I had decided to return to the West Coast of Canada. I found myself falling in love with this magical spot on the beach. Was this the place that I should stay and protect? The fact that the buildings appeared neglected, stirred my interest. Someone should look after this place, I thought.

My friends moved through the lodge and out another door. I sat alone in an oceanside room before a stone fireplace. Overgrown brambles poked through broken windows.



Spiders had set up neatly in the corners of the windows. I have nothing against spiders, but I felt an overwhelming sensation that this place needed someone to love it and bring it back to life. I felt as if the apple trees and buildings were asking to be cared for. A strange sense of responsibility invaded me. I am a fairly practical person, not generally inclined to mystical epiphanies, so I can't explain any of these feelings. It just happened that way.

At that moment, Shivon and our friend Kate returned from their wanderings, quite excited. "Rex, come here. You have to see this." I followed them out onto a deck, facing a magnificent forest of cedar, hemlock, and fir trees. Between the forest and the lodge, an enormous garden appeared, completely overgrown with brambles and grass. Except, there before me, above a hedge, stood bright red hollyhocks, just as the Hungarian woman had described.

Now, my head spun and my knees felt weak. My practical, rational brain could not put all this together. Listening to whispering trees and fortune-tellers was not my usual way of making life decisions, but I felt helpless. Destiny appeared to have her way with me.

Shivon, Rex, and their partner founders (including me, two years later) pulled together the dollars to purchase and invest in the property. More years passed. At a major transitional point for the organization, Carol Newell invested significant capital in this leadership learning experiment. Her generosity and foresight helped transition Hollyhock from a struggling visionary dream—one with a good foothold—into a widely renowned organization, attracting teachers, leaders, and guests from around the world.

## The Examined Life

Today Hollyhock offers a rich mix of teachers and immersive learning, including courses in meditation, yoga, and mindfulness as well as facilitation, leadership, and conscious entrepreneurship. I met

most of those teachers I mentioned earlier at Hollyhock. It is a place where you can find courses that merge inner and outer development. Hollyhock, of course, is special to me.

**Mike Rowlands is President and CEO of Junxion Strategy. Based in London and Vancouver, Junxion supports mission-minded founders, pioneers of corporate social responsibility, non-profit executives, and philanthropists with strategy and branding.**

I no longer believe it's possible to separate personal development from professional and organizational capacity. This notion that businesses are like machines, and that each of us has a role to play as if we were cogs in a mechanism is flawed and dangerous.

Instead, businesses are better conceived as communities—networks of people who work together, cooperating for the greater good of the group. In this concept, better people make for better organizations. And better organizations make for better societies. That's a key part of Hollyhock's perspective, and of mine.

I've been visiting Hollyhock since 2009, when I first attended Social Venture Institute, an annual conference that brings together over 140 social entrepreneurs with advisors, financiers, and other supporters of socially responsible business. It quite literally saved my business. I was in dire straits after the 2008 meltdown, and SVI taught me the skills and gave me the network of connections I needed to weather the storm. It helped me to keep focusing on building a business that delivered social, environmental, and financial returns.

Whenever I return, I learn a little something valuable about myself. And the camaraderie of shared time with such a remarkable group of "thoughtful and committed citizens" is a vital energizer. Hollyhock has made me a better leader, a better entrepreneur, and a better human being.

There are high-value reasons to seek out such places. In the age of the screen, we risk being too physically passive and sedentary. We must continually outsmart the devices we depend on to avoid the modern afflictions of isolation, loss of contact with nature, and “sitting as the new smoking.” We are increasingly aware of the need to be active, experience nature, and eat healthy, avoiding processed, chemical-laden foods. This is good. Rates of diabetes, obesity, cancer, heart disease, liver toxicity—often lifestyle-induced afflictions—are steadily growing. They are killers.

It is also all too common to be *emotionally* sedentary and *spiritually* passive. We know that our physical health is inextricably linked to our psychological health. Spiritual maturity gives us a sense of place and purpose, and makes us far more resilient. It’s wise to commit time to learn the inner realms. Today’s competence demands that we navigate our emotions, conflicts, and relationships, and that we have resources to fall back on when we face disorientation. We can develop better access to intuition and insight. Managing anger, self-doubt, and confusion follows from knowing your own heart and mind.

Raj Sisodia is the author of *Firms of Endearment: How World Class Companies Profit from Passion and Purpose*. In a 2015 interview in the Indian economics and management quarterly *Thinkers*, he was asked about the behavior of exploitive organizations. Sisodia responded that businesses generally operate “with a narrow perspective and a lot of it has to do with the wholesale importing of the old American-style capitalism.... we have to raise the consciousness to get people to see that this is not about sacrificing performance for the sake of these other things, but it’s about aligning all the forces together so that you actually create a lot more value for everybody.”<sup>49</sup>

People in business may feel forced to be cutthroat by external imperatives, like boosting shareholder value. (We as shareholders can forget our role in creating negative consequences by our demands for ever-higher return rates.) Negative, dominating behaviors can result from unresolved confusion about our own true value. Damage can compound exponentially.

We know the better business leader understands their own insecurities, fears, reactions, and ego. Organizations that motivate people, build self-esteem, and support self care and conflict resolution do more good for everyone. Without those practices we become narrower. As the inner world of leadership contracts into fear and negativity, our businesses, organizations, and institutions suffer. Our families suffer, too. We grow callous. We teach our children and others we influence to perpetuate our poor or reactive examples.

The examined person thinks creatively and more independently. They trust an inner knowing, the mix of intuition and practicality. They get things done with flow and ease. They express clear boundaries. Nurture themselves. Speak truth to power.

Such people live adult wisdom. They inspire. They are model ancestors. They are peace warriors for the future. They are all in. They show the way.

The wise advice of entrepreneurial coach Rha Goddess reminds us to look critically at the narratives we're living in our careers and how we're relating to the people in our lives. Otherwise, "if we are not careful in this socially responsible, triple-bottom-line movement, it will be more of the same with better branding."

Good business leaders must retain employees and customers, create useful products and handle mounting demands. Inner skills are gold in this context. Fortunately, there is a vast world of wisdom available. Wise guides redirect us to our deep knowing. Counseling and therapy give us space to reflect and hone our emotional intelligence. Learning retreats help us feel silence and deeper awareness. Nature-based settings usually enhance the experience, adding the most accessible wisdom teacher of all. We learn to face fears and gain tools for successful relationship, with others or, most importantly, ourselves.

Catherine R. Bell is the founder of BluEra, an executive search company in Alberta. Her 2015 book *The Awakened Company* highlights leading from the quality she calls "presence":

Presence is an energy, transmitted almost like light—unseen, and yet capable of revealing everything it touches. Consequently, when we are around a person with great presence, we experience a palpable feeling of our interconnectedness.... effective leadership is a dance between, on the one side, inspiration, motivation, intellectual challenge, and the ability influence others, and on the other side the everyday execution of multiple roles and responsibilities. Because this dance flows from presence, it's both graceful and serene. For these reasons, leading from presence is devoid of the desperate role-juggling we encounter among egos in so much of the business world.<sup>50</sup>

How to increase presence and flow in our lives?

Bell points to aligning your life with your values, and to practices like yoga and meditation. A 2010 study of managers at four European companies showed surprising results from meditation for businesspeople. Summarizing in the magazine *Corporate Knights*, Adria Vasil wrote that “approaches that involved mental silence meditation and relaxation techniques led to significant improvements in social consciousness and socially responsible behaviour, even when CSR principles weren’t actually mentioned. The meditating managers were more apt to prioritize social welfare over economic profit and even more likely to prioritize protection of the natural environment over productivity. Plus, they had a greater overall sense of responsibility and inner harmony.”<sup>51</sup>

Raj Sisodia, commenting on the same study, noted that corporations that offer relaxation and meditation to their employees in the hopes of reducing stress or absenteeism may find their employees’ values and motivations changing. “The consciousness part of conscious capitalism requires that we be more mindful and more awake and see the whole reality, all the interconnections and interdependencies,” said Sisodia. “[Meditation] is one of the best ways that we know how to accomplish that.”<sup>52</sup>

Corporate professionals, entrepreneurs, artists, homemakers, parents, hourly workers, students, retirees—we all need more awareness of and facility with our inner lives.

Knowing how to love, how to be a good person, how to reduce fear or the suffering of stress—understanding our mind-body relationship and how to enhance it—these are skills of the examined life. There are well-worn but unique and individualized versions of these skills for each person. As we navigate the seductions and distractions of daily life, we should take these concepts seriously. As you master emotional skills, you will feel good. “Feeling good” is more elusive, and potent, than meets the eye. It’s contagious. It increases trustable leadership and right action.

Consciousness practices grow clean money revolutionaries!

### **The Keys to the Ferrari**

Leadership is the underlying theme of Hollyhock’s mission, pedagogy, and long-term offering to people and planet. Lifelong leadership work starts at Hollyhock by addressing what has made us who we are. Then it offers the teachers, tools, peer support, and empowerment needed to increase skills. The programs there are multifaceted and holistic, adapted to our roles as leaders in all walks of life.

What is leadership? Leaders are perceptive contributors and collaborative directors—strong stewards of what matters most. Family, community, organizations, businesses, and public service all benefit from wise guidance and effective direction. Leadership underpins all the roles in which we seek to create a world that is fair, fulfilling, and resilient.

There are so many qualities of good leadership: the ability to guide, motivate, and inspire; willingness to empower and share opportunity; authentic devotion to best outcomes for others; empathy; and modeling emotional and spiritual maturity.

Without inner work, leadership is impaired and can become toxic. Poor leadership is self-centered, reactive, and short-sighted.

It can cause lasting damage to people, organizations, and entire cultures.

Learning inner skills should be compulsory for investors, entrepreneurs, managers of public budgets—and, most of all, for those who own massive wealth. In the clean money revolution, we need honest self-assessment of our skills and abilities. We must continually improve and seek help where we need it. Those who handle large sums of money are stewards with monumental responsibilities. As dollars change hands, transactions hurtle them around the planet. Too often blood is spilled with, around, and for the power to hold that money. Pull out a piece of currency and you might not be able to see the blood stains on it—but behind it, can you feel the exhaustion, the fear for one's children, the drudgery of long days of hard labor?

For high-net-worth individuals wanting to invest in change, I offer a note of caution. Owning money does not confer effectiveness at investing, managing, or leading. Wealth increases options but is no guarantee of financial or other specific skills. Those have to be learned separately. Inheriting wealth can be like being handed the keys to a space rocket when you've only ever learned to ride a bicycle. Imagine giving a twelve-year-old the keys to a Ferrari. What's going to happen? Disaster. And the harm won't just be to the inexperienced driver. Many innocent bystanders may suffer.

Assess your abilities carefully. Be humble. There is a lot to learn. As the child of an entrepreneur I had received some limited business experience, but I had many skill and experience deficits. The privilege of inherited money got me better access, and education opened some doors. My status as a white male increased my assumed power in a fundamentally unequal culture. Many connections came easily. But any skills I have—inner, outer, financial, and otherwise—came through hard work, steady practice, and diverse experiences.

When I went “back in” to the business world after my time at OrcaLab I was able to move into organic food investing gently, thanks to years of prior organic gardening involvement. I learned



slowly along the way with many blunders. I advanced with small tests, watching dozens of others and blessed with many guides, stories, and opportunities for hands-on practice. I had many things to learn and many mistakes to make.

The entitlement that comes with owning big money is a devilish trickster. It can fool us into ignoring or hiding our gaps. We may have no training or real experience in the practical and emotional skills involved in money transactions. Compassionate self-honesty about one's true skills, vulnerabilities, and ambitions is crucial. Invest first in your own knowledge, talents, experience, and maturity. For clean money investors going into the for-profit "impact investing" space, some basic questions to ask yourself:

- ♦ Why do you want to make money?
- ♦ How much is enough?
- ♦ What will you do with the money?
- ♦ What legacy do you want to leave?

Even if our vision and values are perfect, we need to assess our skills.

- ♦ Am I ready to take money away from financial advisors who invest my wealth in companies that do unacceptable damage to people and the planet?
- ♦ What is my capacity for evaluating investments?
- ♦ Who can best help me?
- ♦ Am I willing to lose money?
- ♦ Am I ready to own the power of my money and align it with who I believe I am?
- ♦ What is my lifelong leadership program for my own growth and wisdom?

Be wise with money or it will screw you up, along with others you mean to help. People can use the power of money to get all kinds of things to compensate for emptiness or pain in their lives: sex, fame, power. You probably know just what I mean. Be humble and learn to handle money with grace and smarts. All of us who aspire to a role in the clean money revolution should continue self-inquiry and self-assessment. Get help! Seek those with expertise.

Carol Newell knew she wanted help. She built a strong, empowered team. Big outcomes followed. Others who have tried to do it all by themselves, determined to prove their brilliance without putting in the work to earn it, have caused many messes. Sincere intentions don't insulate you or others from consequences.

What are our strengths? What are our gaps? What type of team do we need? Which key advisors? What is our pathway of practice needed to master crucial skills? Are we better being our own entrepreneur—or would be do less harm and more good by finding and hiring other intermediaries with integrity and talent to help shift our capital from destructive and exploitative uses to generative ones?

Experiment and learn with smaller parts of your resources. Wisdom and instinct will develop over time.

## **Back to the Bonfire**

I moved back to Tennessee when my father died in 1984, but every year since, the allure of Hollyhock has brought me across the continent for one transformational experience after another. I joined the board in the early '90s. In 1998 I met my wife, Dana Bass, on the floatplane dock near the Vancouver airport, as we both waited to head to Hollyhock. My Nashville pal Mark Deutschmann was there too, his own love of the place still pulling him back there from such a distance after all those years.

After getting to know Dana's background and sensibility, I asked her after just three days, "Would you like to run this place some day?" She was speechless.

Why did I do that? Instinct, perhaps. But she was the first hospitality and wellness management professional we'd seen who was familiar with unique, eccentric facilities. She understood the depth and complexity of what we were up to on this remote little island. She was moved by the potential. Unbeknownst to me, she had already been feeling a calling inside herself, seeking a life change. Our personal development workshops were growing, the working team was past the all-volunteer era, and it was time to accept that the work underway needed professional management and better structures—along with new eyes, ears, and some magic.

Two years later, we recruited Dana to move with her daughter Noelle and son Dusty, full time, from the Joshua Tree area. Her elder sons Garrett and Trever stayed in school in the States. She became Operations Director, then soon later CEO, of Hollyhock's then-private company. A new era had begun.

Dana and I are now happily married business and life partners. Hollyhock has been a huge part of the meaning and value in our lives. A consistent thread of involvement has been my volunteer role in producing and hosting crafted gatherings in the incredible natural setting—delivering transformational experiences to hundreds of social entrepreneurs and social change activists.

Hollyhock changes lives. It influences its region's culture and mindset with its eclectic mission. Thousands have been directly and indirectly inspired by its ongoing harvest of personal stories and profound outcomes. Nestled in a breathtaking natural setting on the continent's edge, it is a modern mystery school. Such places are important for breaking the bonds of conventional money thinking and creating new approaches. These are eclectic learning gatherings offering delicious organic food, beach fires, ocean swimming, and hot tubs. They build trust and connections. You can imagine the unique value for investors and entrepreneurs able to meet in this way, rather than making a pitch across an office desk!

Hollyhock events attract funders and veterans with big successes from many sectors, as well as starter-level entrepreneurs, creatives, and those who dedicate their lives to positive change. At gatherings like the Social Venture Institute, the Social Change Institute, Summer Gathering, Story Money Impact, Web of Change, Activate, Reel Youth, Indigeneyez, and more, we deliver "life-changing" as if it were a repeatable educational pedagogy. I think it is. We believe this work is about long-term culture change, drawing from the inspiration of natural systems with the strength of diversity—and continual regeneration. We aim for 50 to 70 percent new people at each event in order to welcome fresh voices and perspectives into the mix.

It adds up to a less-understood yet essential big-picture cultural change strategy. A clean money thread weaves through it all. The

massive contemporary brewing of local, organic, craft, renewable, and high-tech solutions needs to be supported with the gatherings, leadership development, and cross-pollination that happen at places like Hollyhock.

**Gibran Rivera, master facilitator and the creator of the Evolutionary Leadership workshop:**

I work on my own growth and transformation and I encourage others to do the same. But I really see little point in personal growth absent a commitment to social transformation. So my focus in life is supporting the development of leadership networks and organizations that are committed to our next evolutionary leap.

Hollyhock's emphasis on collective possibility, on providing a space that yields community among change agents, entrepreneurs, and activists is the most important thing it could be doing. It provides a space that nurtures greater authenticity in relationship. It nurtures trust. These qualities are integral to the change we want to see in the world.

My first time I went to Hollyhock was as facilitator of Web of Change in 2009, and it wasn't just the beauty of the land that got me hooked—it was the magic I found there. Something was happening among participants that was unlike anything that happened anywhere else I had facilitated.

This magic is what keeps me coming back. Our ancestors knew that some places were more conducive than others; they honored and sought places conducive to ritual and connectivity, and I seek to do the same. This is why when I created the Evolutionary Leadership workshop I chose to launch it at Hollyhock. I want to see change agents thrive as they learn to hold and support each other along this arduous marathon to justice.

The revolution needs people with increasing self-mastery. Moving trillions from damaging investments to regenerative ones requires a sense of calling. That calling is our birthright. To engage it we need the skills of personal resilience. We must know ourselves. Then we can serve others better.

Do you have meaningful places where you can connect and share vulnerability? Do you have trusted networks where you get honest feedback? Are your friends able to talk about and take responsibility for their feelings, and understand how to channel strong emotions like anger? Is your work environment generative and inspiring? Are you happy?

There are real tools available to all of us, if only through books or online. We can't all regularly attend places like Hollyhock, but we can find coaches, therapists, support groups, or good friends, who can be wizards with and for us. Their support helps us own our unresolved emotional wounds that can blind us to opportunities, or that can sabotage those opportunities when we get triggered by them. Once we see ourselves and learn new tools, it's GAME TIME!

If you need some Hollyhock medicine, find us just across the water from the end of the gravel road, at the end of the highway, on the left coast of the continent. Amidst the West Coast rainforest, one of the last great green places on Earth, you will find change agents, activist warriors, timeless wisdom, amazing teachers, new-wave companies, and old-school hospitality.

You may just discover, or rediscover, the meaning and purpose of your life.





## Danny Kennedy

is a clean energy pioneer. In 2007, Danny co-founded Sungevity, Inc., the country's largest privately held solar company. He is now managing director of the California Clean Energy Fund and president of CalCharge, a membership consortium that drives breakthroughs in energy storage technology. He is the author of the clean energy manifesto *Roof-top Revolution: How Solar Power Can Save Our Economy—and the Planet—from Dirty Energy*.

### How did you come to do what you do?

My early career was as a global activist, in energy and climate broadly, along with other issues thrown in—all of which, strangely, turned out to be good grist for the mill of starting a business. I had a long campaign career in Greenpeace and other related organizations, mostly climate and energy issues. I worked in Australia, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji, and I helped set up Greenpeace China. When my business partner was trying to talk me into starting Sungevity, I said, “I know how to hurt a company, I don’t know how to start one.” And he said to me: “It’s the same, it’s the same.” And he was right. The human skills of being an activist and an entrepreneur are very similar. Start something with nothing. Inspire people and make things happen.

Around 2006 I burned out on the activist side and needed to push a different path. I felt like we’d convinced people we had a climate change problem; we needed to have a solution. I started Sungevity to scale solutions and demonstrate them, partnering with two people who made it possible.

### Of which Sungevity achievements are you most proud?

We demonstrated that solar could be sold through the Internet. That was really the kind of key intellectual property that we developed—the idea of “sunshine online,” using web commerce as a way

to scale deployment rapidly. We created a great customer experience, which is really the key to any business succeeding. Our goal was to get solar out of the cottage industry zone and into a high-tech customer service business. Now we're now the largest privately held solar company in America. We're also working across Europe, in Germany, the U.K., and the Netherlands. So this company I started with two mates is now worth more than Peabody Coal and serves tens of thousands of customers, with more every month. Spreading sunshine online—I can't complain! It's a great thing to do.

**The fall of coal has been a real wake-up call to a lot of people.**

We talk about energy disruption and we don't yet really understand what that word means. It means really dramatic change, and the coal industry's fate is an example of that. I think it's going to befall other fossil fuels.

**How much capital can the clean energy sector absorb in the next couple of decades?**

The renewable sector is currently absorbing about \$250 billion to \$300 billion per annum. That's just on electricity, not transportation. This means rewiring parts of the world that already have electricity infrastructure, like the United States, Europe, Australia, and Japan. That's a big enough effort, but the heavy lift is bringing electricity to places that don't yet have that infrastructure—huge areas of India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Africa. Global population is expected to be over eleven billion by the end of the century, and Africa's population will likely double by 2050. That's one billion more people in Africa alone.

There are more humans on Earth today that don't have electricity than there were when Edison was around. They're all going to get electricity in the next couple decades, and they're all going to get it from clean energy. And so the numbers will soon grow to the range of \$500 billion annually, more than double what we're currently doing, up to around \$1 trillion annually by 2030. Even under a business-as-usual scenario, Bloomberg New Energy Finance



(BNEF) is forecasting something like \$7 trillion to be spent in clean energy build-outs over the next 25 years. That's crystal-ball gazing, but it's a pretty reasonable forecast. BNEF makes the point often that for the last few years the alternative energy has actually been coal, oil, nuclear, and gas. There's been less money on that side than there has been on wind, solar, water, and clean energy for three years now.

That is good news long term but at the same time the urgency is there. In the lag phase of this ongoing disruption, for many people and species the climate changes are unbearable. They're dying because of them. When you take into account the Paris climate talks and the commitments made to stay below 2 degrees Celsius, and hopefully "1.5 to stay alive"—you're going to need to increase that businesses as usual number by about 75 percent. So you'd be close to seeing an investment in renewables of \$12 trillion over 25 years.

That might sound like a ton, but relative to global capital it's not that big a number. Americans spend about \$500 billion every year on their car loans alone. It's a drop in the ocean.

### **What is the California Clean Energy Fund? What's your role there?**

I moved on to the California Clean Energy Fund (CalCEF) in late 2015. It's 12 years old, an organization here in the Californian firmament that connects money to ideas, investors, and investments. We're also managing a \$25-million grant program for very early stage entrepreneurs in sustainable energy in California. We have also a 501(c)(3) which educates financiers, policy makers, and regulators around ways to do climate-solution finance. We've started some companies out of that, based on where we've identified needs and gaps. We also have a 501(c)(6) that is basically a trade association. The main program on that side of the house is CalCharge, which is a public-private partnership working to accelerate the tech on battery and energy storage.

That's some of what we do. Now we're growing globally and trying to bring some of our experience, lessons, and models—and capital—into Asia and Africa, where global energy capacity is going

to be built out in the next couple decades. My role is to help bring some international focus to it, because it's been a very California-oriented model.

**What does bringing an international focus to a California-based clean energy fund mean?**

California would be the eighth-largest country on Earth if it were a country, and there's this amazing reality that it has gone from coal dependency twenty or thirty years ago to almost no coal in the mix now. It will be 50 percent renewable by 2030 by law, and it'll probably get to 100 percent renewable way before anyone else. California has all the political will in the world and it's been good for the state. We've built jobs. There's Google and Apple in the mix of course, but also Tesla and SolarCity and Sungevity have created more jobs and wealth than any other industry in the state. That's a good news story we want to share with the world. The learning, lessons, policies, and pieces that make that happen need to be rapidly replicated if we're ever going to deal with climate change.

One of the things that we always underestimate with clean energy is that it's job-dense. It's labor-rich, whereas fossil fuel is capital-intensive and labor-light. You create something like 24 million jobs in a doubling of clean energy. And if we were to do what Paris requires, it's way more than doubling by 2030.

**If an investor wants to get into clean energy, there's a broad swath of what might be labeled that way. But it's not always clear: the U.N. for example does not consider big hydro projects to be clean energy. What should investors be looking for under the clean energy umbrella?**

There's a portfolio of products. They may not be as 100-percent pure as the driven snow, but they are clean. I agree with the analysis that big hydroelectric is not clean, but run-of-river hydro might be, along with canal-based solutions. But I think they're going to be less important. Wind and solar are the dominant generating resources. And then there's a whole lot of smart energy improvements that'll be



made to existing grids—and will be implemented in the new grids that these leapfrogging nations adopt.

These new grids won't follow the old centralized model. They'll be more like a fractalized web of micro-grids. The key technologies there are actually storage and micro-processing power to manage a just-in-time supply of electricity to meet demand. So there's a range of things. I'm personally quite convinced that a hundred years from now, photovoltaic solar will be the dominant source. There'll be a transitional period where we'll use whatever we can, while we accelerate the adoption of clean energy for dirty energy as we realize what we've done to the weather.

But we as a civilization will end up being largely solar powered, because semi-conductors become cheaper the more you make them. We've just hit the threshold in the last year or two and now we're pretty much cheaper than anything. And so we're going to start scaling production and that's going to drive down cost. And before you know it, electricity will be this thing that comes out of flat-plate semi-conductors called PV at almost no marginal cost wherever you put it. And that will just mean a massive adoption of this product over decades. By the end of the century we'll be largely a solar-powered society.

**Does clean energy have a social justice aspect?**

**Can the rise of clean energy actually help with wealth disparity and income inequality?**

I bring a strong equity lens to this work. "One hundred percent clean energy for a hundred percent of the people." That's our vision. To have the right social impact as you rewire the world and take over the commanding heights of the economy, you should be intentional about who you seek to serve and how. We need that equity focus. To date that equity piece has been I think a bit sidelined by the clean energy industry, just because we've had our heads down and been focused on execution.

I want to make sure that as the clean economy rises—which it inevitably will now—that it happens in a better way, lifting all boats

on its tide. By that I mean that it involves a more diverse community. It shouldn't just make more rich the people that are already rich care of last century's energy system. I often say that clean energy has much more than an environmental benefit. The moniker I use is 3D energy: not just *distributed*, but *decentralized* in terms of ownership and *democratized* in terms of control.

The three Ds are basically a distributed architecture, versus running the big central coal power station way out of sight and out of mind. Your power source is closer to home, if not right on top of your head. That means decentralized ownership. Those assets in society that power our lives, lifestyles, industries, and economy could be owned by local capital. You see that in Germany, which has adopted 35 gigawatts of wind and 40 gigawatts of solar or something in that ballpark on an 86-gigawatt base capacity. Most of that solar and wind is locally owned. Farmers, cooperatives, and things like that.

So the community can have control of the heights of the economy that used to be centralized in the hands of the few, because fossil fuels were weirdly concentrated in place—and required intense capital to extract and transport and refine and deliver. At a high level it gives me great optimism because sunshine is spread pretty evenly. If it's even more abundant anywhere it's amongst the poorest of the world population. I'd hope to see these people taking this opportunity to leapfrog some nasty power structures that would otherwise control their destiny. With a battery and a bit of PV you can better control your destiny. And that is technologically possible today.