

North American Council
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CLAIMING NORTH AMERICA FOR THE WORLD

In 1974 our family left the North American Continent and were sent to Southeast Asia. It was a great experience. We lived there four and a half years. We were assigned back to the United States in 1978, to the "nation" of Texas, which I have learned to love and appreciate. Now, I have a confession. It took me from August 1978 until April 1979 to like North America. But I will tell you this: it took me going away, leaving this continent, and coming back again, before I began to appreciate it, and to love it. So today I want to talk about North America and its new role that you and I here have decided that it is going to play in the world. I think, at this Council, the first point has to do with the new role of North America. I want to talk about four things: the New Role of North America, our New Style, the New Local and the New Strategy.

Regarding the new role: I think that, as a Council, we have decided to struggle with the claim that has been laid upon this great continent. We have put our geography back together again; I think the regional meetings and a lot of other things have done that. I think that what has happened here is that we have begun to rehearse our past. It is no secret that the naivete of being a North American as "the savior of the world" is gone. Everybody knows that; just look at the wrap-up of the seventies with Vietnam, Iran, OPEC, the energy crisis. You can name a series of world events that effect you in your local situation, which have crushed us and pushed us back to the point where we understand. Even my father understands that North America is not the savior of the world. He does not know what it is, but he understands what it is not. It is easy to beat up on North America - so easy. But, at the same time, I think that you and I have come to appreciate the gifts of North America. One of these has to do with North America having pioneered in giving democracy to the world in its practical forms. We have pioneered in racial dignity, in different forms of integration, of attempting to give dignity to the various races. We are pioneers in giving technology to the world. We have given globality to the world. We have given the whole idea of colonial revolution to the world - just the business of standing up and deciding as a people who and what we were. These are some of our gifts to the world; there are many more.

Relative to human development, there has been an unevenness in our developing humanness. We have not done this as other nations like India or the Philippines or Indonesia, or Korea, where a nation as a whole has declared that local people are going to have their say, or that human rights are for all. We have done this for pockets of people, or maybe geography, or for the minorities. I think we are unique in that respect. We have seen ourselves, especially in North America, as a movement, as a transestablishment. Our role has been to be the transestablishment within this continent, and wherever we are. Relative to awakening, our history has been that we have awakened people, in the past, from the outside. The shift here is from the outside to the inside. We used to go in to a place as pedagogues, keep our distance, do what we had to do for a weekend, and disappear. Nobody could come into the room until the table was set, and we

would not talk to anybody around the edges. That is what I call "The Outside". Now in the role of the transestablishment, you are never standing still; you are always shifting; in that respect we were on the pole of the dis-establishment. I think the shift has been to the establishment, within the transestablishment. Today we are no longer invisible, we are no longer in the sewers, we are out front and visible. And we are literally walking, talking and eating with public officials, heads of corporations, state agencies, foundations, school boards, you name it. We sit across a table or a desk from a corporation president, and we talk about our programs; and say, "My God, that could be me!" Now, I am radically different. I am a part of this ragged troop. If he only knew! I think that is where the question of the Order gets raised these days. Who are we? Are you sure I'm a "nobody"? I just had lunch with the governor of Mississippi, are you sure? That is a struggle; that is a struggle for us in North America - and probably a few other places, too.

We have talked about how history changes: history goes along; then an elite group of people (that means they are just especially called) pull themselves away. They create models about where they think history ought to go. Then they come back and infuse these models into the masses. I think where we are at at this point, is that of going out and infusing our models into the masses. They are not our models; they are the Word of Possibility. How, in a thousand different forms, do you tell people their lives are significant? How do you give them the opportunity to experience themselves as meaningfully engaged? That is where we are. There are so many experiments going on in the urban I cannot believe it. There is practically no agency in this country that we are not in conversation with - and they want what we've got. They think we have models; we don't have any models much, or methods, we've just got us! They want us. They can't buy us, so our front is our methods. That's the way I figure it. We are dedication. You cannot buy dedication. We're screwy! Just keep telling yourself, "We're apart from." That has helped me.

Now, the trick is in that model: those models of how the school should go, and how the church should go and the community should go. What do we do next? History turns, and it is turning. Our struggle right now in coming into the 1980's is, do we stay there? Do we bend with it? I think that is the question. I think that you and I are experiencing a new style that is demanded. We are changing. I experience myself as changing. I cannot go back and do what I used to do. The old means and modes of my operation will not work. The other night I was asked to do an Imaginal Education program for Training, Inc. It was simple. We talked about education and how you motivate people. Everybody had a very good time, including myself. In fact, the man wanted to give me a job, he thought I was so good. I thought, "Boy, he does not know." As I was coming home in the car, I thought to myself, "I'd love to go back to teaching." I would just give anything if I could go back to teaching. And I thought, "But, I can never go back." It was not just teaching; and I couldn't answer why. Something new is demanded of us today as a body of people, not just you or me individually. And I think the shift here in the style has to do, not with vocation, in the first instance, but shifting from the "gracious" presence to a "guiding" presence. This style requires leadership, requires direction, requires walking along with, requires asking no one to go where you would not go yourself.

Finally, the operating mode of this style is (the only thing I can think of) "Raw guts". This makes sense because we do not know what a new style looks like. Any time you are changing style there are no models. You are inventing it, and it does take guts. We are inventing something out of nothing. There is a boldness demanded that transforms this gracious presence into an aggressive stride. Suddenly you look down and realize there is a doubled-up fist inside your "velvet glove". It is the difference between laying down and letting the world rape you with all its possibility, and getting up and moving.

What I think of is a social pioneer. What did it take to establish this continent? Now, I am not talking about the "wagons-west" only, because if you were an Indian, you were on the other side of that. I am talking about inventing new forms of community. I am talking about what kind of style it took to figure out how to work with different groups of people in this melting pot we've got? What kind of style did it take to invent or establish systems of transportation or education? You see, one of the reasons **this continent has offended everybody else in the world is because of our style: because we are bold, we are practical and we live.** Now we are ugly and we are aware of it; but we get the job done - at least we have in the past. A lot of the people in this globe have adopted our style. And as North Americans sitting in this room, you and I need to deal with this. This has to do with our guilt; it has to do with a lot of things. We are North Americans, period! Now what is called for nowadays is a new style; not just in our work, but so that our work can enable this continent to share its gifts with the whole world. I don't have any more clues to this style, but I do believe there are things like this: you look around this room and see that this new style is going to be global. It is going to be ecumenical (I was going to say "pluriform".) It is going to include consensus-making. You and I in the next six months are going to be experimenting with this style. If you feel uneasy in your guts, if you say, "My God, I feel like a phoney, I've never done anything like this before" that is exactly the way you are supposed to feel in the midst of a new invention like this. We will all compare notes in July I suppose.

My third point has to do with the fact that there is a new local - and I don't even want to use the word "dynamic". Carlos said that you can't shoot a dynamic, you can shoot a revolutionary. In the midst of us there is a new local which has emerged. This pioneering is to put back into the hands of the people the chance to participate in the future. That is our role. And what this continent has always stood for is "the future", allowing people wherever they are to participate in the decision making of the whole thing. Now, that was what we said we were about a long time ago in this continent. We've not done that perfectly but we've done it. There is something new coming into being. In the next six months, you and I are going to be experimenting with that.

We have discovered "local people" is not only the 85%. Local people is you and me and the bureaucrat is as local as you and me. In this continent there is a diversity of the local. That is what you and I have discovered. It doesn't have to do with where you live - a village, or a highrise; we're local. Let me tell you how I got kind of clear on this. When we lived in Indonesia, we developed a lot of money. We had to send it all to the Centrum in Singapore because it was global money. That was great! A colleague who was working with me once said, "You know I'd just like to "be the globe" for once and get a little of that money!" Now that helps me with the local.

Local is how you care for your community. I don't mean just geography with the community, I mean a community is a group of people. It can be people in a high school, it can be people in a corporation, it can be people on the floor of Hughes Tool Company. That is what I mean by a community of people who work together to get a job done. Our task with the local is to enable people to love their situation wherever they are. It's us. I think we have discovered as we have worked with local people around the world, especially in this continent on a day-after-day basis in small towns and large cities, that every human being is estranged from his or her community; that every human being is lonely; that suffering is everywhere. Rob Duffy said today: list the people you wouldn't want waked up to their own care, and how they could be effective in acting out their care. Just list them - I dare you! Finally, what you and I discover is that in the poor, the affluent, little towns, suburbs, that there is a deep need for people to be wakened to their care, and given the opportunity to act out effectively their care. I don't think this is simple - the spirit problem in this continent. But, I do think that it has to do with being estranged - people being estranged from their communities, being disenfranchised. We all know this: feeling useless, feeling impotent, feeling as though you cannot produce anything worthwhile. And that is in this continent.

What you and I also know is that people know this; there is a resurgence. I have never understood resurgence of local people until yesterday. Local people care; they know that it is possible to do something. They have got confidence. Resurgence has to do with your spirit. It has to do with deciding that "I am going to get my say in." There is a resurgence in this continent- not just in Iran, not just in the Philippines, not just in Korea, but here. People are no longer going to be left out. And our task is to sustain that decision, to help them and give form to that kind of creativity. People know about participating. They know what difference it makes. The Hughes Tool Company Productivity Index (that means how much money they are making) is going up. In the midst of that, they want all the floors of their shops to have monthly Town Meetings, in order to get their people's creativity into the "stew" of that company. You play the Devil's Advocate and ask them "why": they are making money. They say, "Well, to help the absenteeism." "Well, to help motivate people." "Well, to help the guy who is doing one part of the drill bit know how the drill bit fits on the whole thing, and how it is used." All over our continent people know that motivity is what sustains a decision that people have already made. People in this continent have already decided they are going to count.

Finally, and this is the hardest part for me, the strategies in North America have to do with our decision in this continent to reach the two million human settlements, to reach every last person. In this Council I think we have made a death resolve to do that - to give every last human being a chance to experience his or her life as significant, just like we used to talk about in RS-I. We have decided that. What we have decided is that every person has got to experience himself or herself as a human instead of a cow, or a chicken, or a chair. You are not born human - you have a brain and you have a consciousness, or a conscience, you have an imagination, but that gets learned. But you also can go to sleep about humanness. So, what we are about is enabling people to be human. Humanness is more than just having enough clothes, industry,

food, etc. It has to do with participating, getting your say in, your creativity into the stew, making a difference, knowing that you are making a difference, and having confidence in who you are.

Now those strategies: the first one was Mass Awakening Phasing. I call that "sector saturation". We are experimenting in this continent with forms of getting to the masses of people. We have got regional campaigns, state campaigns, urban pilots, family pilots, clusters, musters, everything we've got. We want to reach everybody. We have to say to ourselves that we are about the job of experimenting to get to the masses. Another strategy is Depth Training. The HDTS in North America this quarter was a major breakthrough. We have come to an edge relative to sustaining decision-making. This has to do with how you sustain people in the decisions they have already made; how you give them the tools- the intellectual and social and spirit methods. So we have said to ourselves that the HDTS is critical. The other strategy we are using is HDP Transition. This is a core of committed people who stand as a sign of hope - pillars of hope. I think the Signal Communities and Clusters is another way of sustaining people in their decision to be human beings. These four strategies particularly stuck with me.

I believe the challenge of this continent is, first of all, the fact that people are just ready. If you go to Peduke, Kentucky, which is only thirty miles from where I was brought up, people are ready. What they are ready to do is "do something". Finally, I think the flip side of awakenment is that we have learned it is more than a one-time thing. It is more than to have a Town Meeting, and a guy saying, "I can live my life, I have a fulfilled life, I am excited about what I can do." It is more than that. We pioneered in this in Arizona, and Mississippi and other places too. We have found that awakenment is day after day after day because people go to sleep. You and I go to sleep - to the fact that we are human, that other people have the possibility of being human. So, with awakenment, what you waken them up to day after day is the fact that they care for this earth, which I believe they do. And we are offering them a chance to care. Massive awakenment, first of all, has to do with changing the social fabric. In doing so, massive awakenment illuminates where the suffering is, where disenfranchisement is, where estrangement is, where loneliness is, where social ills are. Suddenly those towns that are close together know that in Nanchez and all those other Mississippi towns, people are doing the same thing they are doing and they begin to see. Now what this is about is do-ment, Do-ment is alive. In a Town Meeting, the challenges are nothing. Everybody knows the do's. They smell the do's. They know what to do. Do-ment is an alive thing. It is a presence. People smell the disrelationship; that is just a given in our time. Second of all, what this flip side of awakenment is about is giving people who are all ready for action in their community the eyes to see the disrelationship, the inhumanness, the suffering in all its forms - or, to see their own care. That, in our time, is the given. The third thing is that we give them the opportunity to understand that when they care, they can make a difference; that they, crippled, neurotic, stupid, fat, whatever they are, can make a difference. This is the Word of Possibility; it is witnessing love. We found out that that is not enough. We have to give them the opportunity to have the spiritual, intellectual and social methods to effectively make the difference they want to make. That is probably where these cluster towns come up. We have got to go and stay with people or train people so they

can keep on deciding day after day to be the giants they are. Finally, this flip-side of awakening has to do with educating the heart, the imagination and the spirit to continue day after day after day to believe and hope. Think what it takes for you and me to believe and hope every day.

Now the urgency is something like this; it is easy to see and smell the urgency with the kind of suffering and disengagement going on in small towns, in tall buildings, in corporations, wherever it is. The destiny of this continent is, I believe, at stake. And our job is to get to every last person. It comes to me like this: I live in this building every day. It is hard to live in this building, but it doesn't make any difference. Every day you and I are asked to do fifty thousand things. "Could you do this?" "Could you do that?" "Could you meet me here?" "Could you see to that?" "Would you please?" "Could we talk a minute?" Now, I finally manage to get only about three or four things done in a day, and then I try at the end of the day to go back and reflect on what I really did do. But, usually I go to sleep by then. That is my day. I could not begin to tell you what a filled-up day I've got. Then, I say to myself, "Are you bored, Kay?" "Is this a monotonous life?" It is anything but dull and monotonous and boring. But did you ever think of all those people, like those in that highrise right over there, who never have anybody ask them one time in a week to do anything significant? They experience themselves as worthless. Who cares, why bother if it is only me. That, my friends, is the urgency of this continent. I don't care if they are in a highrise, or a suburb or a little town, or on the Pittsburgh Pirates, wherever they are. Your job and mine is to give these people the opportunity to do something significant with their lives so that they too understand what it means to make a difference in history, rather than being just a cog in a wheel. I tell you I get passionate about it!

When you read those regional priorities, that is what it's all about. If we only do half of what we say we are going to (I'm not supposing we do half, I'm supposing we do whole), it is going to cost us. I can "hack" the Dark Night; it is the Long March that really gets me. Day after day after day after day, minute after minute after minute. The cost is high. Remember Paul? He said, "You think you're tired and discouraged and you're the only one?" We are all tired and discouraged. Does your vision get clouded and you don't know where you are going? Well, everybody is like that. Do you get angry at your colleagues? Like you want to kill them? We all do. Do you keep saying to yourself, my credit card has expired and nobody is going to pay it? There are a lot of us like that. Do you say to yourself there are no rewards? Well, I think the biggest absurdity of all is that I find myself not caring. I do not give a damn what happens. Now that is really ironic because I profess to care. Yet I experience myself day after day not caring. I just want to run away, leave. Well, we are all in that boat. And this next six months are going to be really hard. But, I ask you, where else would you be? What else would you be doing in the next six months? If somebody is going to answer this, just go ahead and tell me - where else could you live such a gloriously filled up life than going to the last person on this continent with the opportunity to live his or her life in a significant manner. Where else? Wouldn't you want every person in the world to have this experience? Who would you want to leave off this list? That is the urgency. Do you feel it is more urgent in Africa? No. Going to the poor and disenfranchised and the lonely and the weak - what else has it ever been about?

Finally, I just want to say that an overwhelming kind of gratitude comes to me these days, because all we really have is each other. We are "gloriously human" with all our frailties and all our idiosyncracies and all our weaknesses and all our strengths and all our sensitive humor and all our dullness, we've just got each other. In the next six months, we must learn to take care of each other. Each family I know is in a state of crisis; everybody I know is in a vocational crisis; but we still have each other. And I think you and I probably have deep gratitude for this moment. The category of "undeservedly honored" has come to mean something to me. It's hard to say thank you. In the time of glory and fulfillment, it's just hard to say thank you; yet we've got to learn that.

The demand on us is to live an absolved, forgiven life with each other, wherever we are. In six months we'll come back and we'll hold each other accountable for what we said we were going to do.

