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Excerpts from Collaboration Across Boundaries

*By Gibrán Rivera, Interaction Institute for Social Change*

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## Excerpts from Collaboration Across Boundaries

By Gibrán Rivera, Interaction Institute for Social Change

Our heightened awareness of the global environmental crisis invites us to understand the crucial place of environmental education as a response to that crisis. But as we set out to educate, we are faced with the same historical and seemingly insurmountable boundaries that have challenged the environmental movement for decades. The immediate and global nature of the problem demands that we transcend these boundaries of race, class, and location, as well as those of political affiliation and economic ideology. Where traditional coalition approaches and deal-making have failed us in the past, it now becomes extremely important to re-imagine a framework for collaboration across boundaries, which might make possible the significant shift needed if we are to get ourselves out of this burning hole.

My own effort to re-imagine such a collaborative approach leads me to focus on two aspects of collaborative change. One of these is what I refer to as “location” or the precise place where change can happen. The other is the “approach,” or how we conceive of ourselves as interveners when coming into contact with the space we want to change.

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My proposition for collaboration across boundaries launches from a set of conclusions that stem from an emergent consensus about the state of social change movements in the United States. One might say that the very lens, the very models, that we use to observe, measure, and *be* in the world are fast becoming obsolete. This is observable first and foremost through the evidence of a planet that has quite literally been set ablaze by a dominant but deficient idea of progress.

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What I’m saying – and this is central to my proposal for collaboration – is that our habitual way of doing business, our most established systems, the dominant paradigms are no longer fit for the job of helping us reinvent ourselves. I paraphrase Albert Einstein in saying that a problem cannot be solved at the same level of consciousness at which it was created.

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We have already established that we are living under dire circumstances. We have proposed that the institutional arrangements that are most obviously available to us are actually obsolete and, therefore, lacking in their capacity to bring about the necessary change. And we have also proposed that by looking at ourselves as part of nature, rather than outside of it, we might be able to see ourselves within an evolutionary pattern that breathes out diversification while breathing in integration. So how is any of this related to collaboration across boundaries?

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By creating spaces where people from very different ecosystems can be held as they come together to invent, innovate and make room for emergence, we are able to facilitate collaboration across boundaries and make room for the necessary shift that will get us out of the burning hole we have dug for ourselves.