# CHAPTER TWO

# Start counting FROM ONE:
## Individuals and social change



When we talk about social change, we talk about movements and organisations, about building a critical mass. We talk about going national and going global. But movements and organisations are made up of individuals. An individual who speaks out or who acts, often at great risk to themselves, makes a difference. An individual can be an instigator, a follower, a dissenter, a supporter, a facilitator. All these are active roles that are needed to bring about social change. What moves an individual to act? What awakens them to the need for change? Psychologists and philosophers have argued over this for centuries – is it selfishness? Guilt? Fear? Courage? Compassion? Knowledge? Are we just caught up in historical forces over which we have little or no control?

Motivations are necessarily complex and often mysterious even to the individuals themselves.

But reflection – a conscious attempt to understand ourselves better – is often part of the process. In order to understand and change others and the society we live in we start with understanding and changing ourselves.

This chapter includes reflective stories, stories of self-exploration, where the storytellers start with self-reflection and move on to look at their own practice and their place in the world. This self-reflection enables them to understand others better. It also includes stories that are acute observations of individuals who have taken steps to change the world and consider what might have moved them to do so.

Each story is unique and by presenting a variety of stories and reflections, we hope to stimulate readers to reflect on themselves and those around them. What motivates you to change? How can you support others to change?

# Me, Myself, I: Identity and Social Change

Our understanding of the world around us and its injustices often starts with our own experiences. The realisation that other people are judging us and making assumptions about us, because of the way we look or where we come from, can profoundly shift the way we see the world. It can lead to anger and frustration, even a feeling of powerlessness. But it can also lead us to think about how we judge others and understand how identity is made and how stereotypes can be challenged. It can lead us on the journey towards a world where people are able to forge their own identities and where we can meet each other on our own terms.

## My personal journey

**Elis Motta**

I was born in a middle-class Brazilian family. My parents and grandparents were able to provide shelter, plenty to eat and access to good education and excellent health services. Even in times of "struggle," none of these things was ever threatened. This made us a "minority" in terms of population numbers, but mainstream in terms of the power and privilege we automatically earned without having to make any effort to achieve them.

Our socio-economic status is only one of the aspects that form our identity. In my case, not only did my family belong to the middle-class, but also, in Brazil, we are a white family. These two characteristics made my position of privilege even stronger. For over 20 years of my life I truly believed that I did not suffer oppression or discrimination of any type – certainly not if I compared myself to the vast majority of the Brazilian population.

Of course, I was aware of the oppression and inequality so present in my country. Brazil has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world and also suffers from historical racial inequalities. Because of this, for many years I considered whatever discrimination I might experience for being a woman, for example, as something minor in that context. Being aware of my class and race privileges made me feel that I was immune to any gender discrimination.

It was only as an adult that I started to feel discrimination in my own skin. There were three reasons for this change. My own understanding of what it means to be a woman changed, and I became more aware of the dynamics and effects of sexism and oppression related to gender. I moved to a totally different social and cultural context where my identity as a white person was no longer recognized by the people and official institutions around me. And being a heterosexual no longer reflected my sexual orientation.

These changes happened over a period of 2 years and caused a significant shift in my perspective of privilege and oppression. I no longer understood the fact that, for safety reasons, I could not walk by myself at night as my brother could, as being just part of life or just 'that's how the world is'. I'm not saying such safety precautions should be ignored. What I am saying is that they are simply not fair and we should not just accept it as 'this is how it has always been, this is how it will always be'. Also, after moving to the United States, for the first time in my life people around me had a different perception of my racial identity. Now instead of being white, I was considered Latina and was quickly shifted from the mainstream to the margin. Finally, as I started dating women, for the first time in my life I had the following thought: 'Is it safe for me to hold my partner's hand in public?' This in itself was an explosion of awareness of all the privilege I had experienced throughout my life, simply for being in heterossexual relationships.



But even with these three significant changes, the privileges which come with being a middle-class person have made it a lot easier for me to deal with the discrimination I faced for being a woman, being perceived as Latina and for being queer. Our different identities are not independent of each other. They are all interlocked and the dynamics between them make us who we are. The combination of all our identities (even the ones that change over time) also has a huge influence on how we are affected by power and privilege dynamics.

It would certainly be a lot more difficult for me to fight oppression if I were a poor-queer-Latina-woman rather than a middle-class-queer-Latina-woman (as defined by the US logic) or a middle-class-queer-white-woman (as defined by the Brazilian logic). Every time an underprivileged identity is combined with another underprivileged identity, they make each other stronger. So the process of interlocking privileges (or lack of privilege) works more like a snowball than like a mathematical equation.

Understanding how the different aspects of our identities combine and how they influence each other is no simple task. One of the ways to start is by reflecting on who we are, how many identities we have in ourselves, and what identities other people see in us (which we may or may not agree with, but that influence our interactions with others and with the world).

One thing that has helped me to better understand myself was to see identities as fluid. Some identities can change over time, or depending on the context we are in. For instance, I was considered white by the people around me until I moved to a place where the people around me thought differently. Identities are also fluid in the sense that they don't have to be 'either-or', even when we really think they do: people don't have to be classified only as 'woman' OR 'man' (and for that matter, people shouldn't even have to be classified at all). There are several other non-binary gender identities out there. And if by any chance we don't find one that fits us, why not create our own? After all, it is OUR identity, it is how WE see ourselves, how WE interact with the world and how WE want to be recognized by others.

Once we have managed to get a good grasp of our own identities, we can continue the journey and try to understand what privileges or forms of discrimination are related to these identities. This includes understanding the power dynamics around us, and how our identities relate and impact the identities of others. Reflecting about ourselves allows us to also look around and ask ourselves: what OTHER identities are there? How do THEY experience power and privilege? And what does my identity have to do with that?

*Some identities can change over time, or depending on the context we are in.*

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What are the different identities that I carry and how do they interact with each other?
- How do my different identities affect the way people treat me?
- What aspects of my life were determined or influenced by them?
- When have I not noticed I was being privileged because of my identity, and how can I try to become more aware of that?

In the late 1980s, law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw conducted a study about Black women in the USA who had suffered discrimination at work for being Black women, and demonstrated how the antidiscriminatory laws did not understand and deal with the notion that someone might be discriminated against based on the intersection of their identities. Crenshaw coined the term 'intersectionality', which is now used widely in feminist theory and research. She offers two metaphors that illustrate this concept quite clearly.

## The traffic intersection metaphor

**Crenshaw says:**

"Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in an intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (…)"

"Providing legal relief only when Black women show that their claims are based on race or on sex is analogous to calling an ambulance for the victim only after the driver responsible for the injuries is identified. But it is not always easy to reconstruct an accident: Sometimes the skid marks and the injuries simply indicate that they occurred simultaneously, frustrating efforts to determine which driver caused the harm. In these cases the tendency seems to be that no driver is held responsible, no treatment is administered, and the involved parties simply get back to their cars and zoom away."



The traffic intersection can have as many roads crossing it as there are identities. And it's easy to see that the more roads there are, the more chances you have of having an accident.

### The basement metaphor

The second metaphor offered by Crenshaw is the following:

"Imagine a basement which contains all people who are disadvantaged on the basis of sex, class, sexual preference [sic], age and/or physical ability. These people are stacked – feet standing on shoulders – with those on the bottom being disadvantaged by a full array of factors, up to the very top, where the heads of all those disadvantaged by a singular factor brush up against the ceiling. Their ceiling is actually the floor above which only those who are not disadvantaged in any way reside. In efforts to correct some aspects of domination, those above the ceiling admit from the basement only those who can say that 'but for' the ceiling, they too would be in the upper room. A hatch is developed through which those placed immediately below can crawl. Yet this hatch is generally only available to those who – due to the singularity of their burden and their otherwise privileged position relative to those below – are in the position to crawl through. Those who are multiply-burdened are generally left below unless they can somehow pull themselves into groups that are permitted to squeeze through the hatch."

## Practical implications

Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality has greatly impacted and influenced feminism and the academic world. Plenty of other studies and theories around the topic came after her, further developing and deepening the idea that we are not 'only women' or 'only black' or 'only queer'… Rather, the dynamics of all of these identities, when they are combined into one single individual, are a lot more complex than we thought, and deserve careful attention.

So how is this theoretical concept relevant to our practice and how does it relate to social change? Well, the same way that theoreticians should be taking into account the different aspects that make and influence one's identity, so should practitioners. Take the example of an organization that works to end domestic violence. Most probably they focus a good part of their work on women (as women are clearly the ones who most often experience domestic violence). Now, does domestic violence mean the same for heterosexual women, black women, upper-class women, disabled women, white women, young women, poor women, queer women…? What about poor black women? Or poor queer women? Or young disabled women? Do all these different groups experience the problem the same way? Is there a strategy to fight the problem that would address how all of them experience it? Is domestic violence only related to gender – or is it also affected by other aspects of social identity?

When we, as practitioners, work for the rights of women, or young people, or economically disadvantaged groups – to name a few – we should always be reminded that while we are here working with, for example, youth, there is another practitioner or organization around the corner working with LGBTQI rights – and, most importantly, there are a lot of young queer people who are affected and might benefit from the work both of you do. So how do we look at these people as being more than just 'young' or 'queer'? And how do we incorporate that into our work? And finally: how do we work together to make it easier for the people at the bottom of the basement to come up – out of the basement?

GALVÃO 14

## Voices: the building blocks of social change

*"If we don't speak up, then no one will know we are here"*

– Rose Mapendo – *Pushing the Elephant*

Social change can start with one word or one sentence. A voice that has never been heard before speaks out and people start to listen. It might be our own voice or our role may be to enable others to find their voices, as in the story of Maria and in this story shared by Clothilda:

> '*... if she spoke out, it would help to bring out the other women who were suffering in silence...*

### Under the mango tree

**Clothilda Babirekere, Uganda Media Women's Association**

It is a hot and sunny afternoon as the villagers slowly start to gather around the mango tree. Some sit, others stand, and eventually they are all settled. I watch these proceedings from the roadside. I notice that Nasiwa has not yet arrived, but she finally emerges through the crowd of villagers. Her presence makes me move closer.

She stumps the ground with heavy strong footsteps, her big body swaying left and right and her head held high. Suddenly there is total silence, only the sound of birds chirping from the nearby trees can be heard as she takes her seat next to the village chief.

Nasiwa Margaret is a woman leader in Mulagi Sub County, Kyankwanzi district, Uganda.

The meeting starts, and soon it is time for Nasiwa to speak. She fumbles with her long dress and stands up. With great hesitation she walks to the centre of the crowd where she seems to contemplate her next move. Finally, in a quiet shy voice in contrast to her usually strong authoritative character, she testifies before the large village crowd. As she starts to speak, her eyes show her inner feelings; a mixture of sadness and happiness. "My husband beats and kicks me. He scratches my thighs and back," she says. A tear rolls down her cheek



I have known Nasiwa for a few months now. We met the last time the Domestic Violence Prevention Team was in her village. We talked about the violence that was going in so many homes around the country and Nasiwa knew it was happening in her home too. She told me about the violence she faced. She kept on confiding in me until, I believe, she got the determination she needed to speak out. She knew that if she spoke out, it would help to bring out the other women who were suffering in silence and they would be able to get the assistance and counseling they needed.

This is the moment she has always dreamt of, but never had the courage to carry through. For decades she has accepted domestic abuse in fear of her parents' and society's reaction to the revelation. Most of all, she feared losing the respect and dignity the community had for her. But now Nasiwa has broken the silence about her suffering.

Within seconds of her testimony, her neighbours, relatives and friends disown her. They abuse and ridicule her for disgracing them. Her husband wonders in disbelief as she narrates to the village meeting what he regards as bedroom affairs. The local leaders too rebuke and accuse her of poisoning a peaceful community by speaking the unspoken.

She remains determined to continue speaking out rather than die quietly. She volunteers to sensitize community members on domestic violence. She wants to become a role model for her community. Because she was a leader, her confession carries weight. Soon, women come one by one and start confiding in her about their abusive experiences. They reason that, if a leader could come out and admit to being abused, then they have nothing to fear. Eventually, men too put aside their male pride and confided in her. As the number of voices increases, there is a need for a space where people can be listened to, guided, and counseled, a place where people feel safe and comfortable enough to open their hearts. The local council leader agrees to construct a shelter to be used as a village court where people go and report abuse. A Sub County which has not been functional for a long time is replaced by a Sub County Domestic Violence Court, manned by Nasiwa's followers. A domestic violence perpetrator, who has reformed is appointed to head this court. Other opponents including religious, cultural, and opinions leaders become collaborators and use their platforms to speak about domestic violence.

Nasiwa and her supporters organize plays that not only entertain the people, but also sensitize and educate them about domestic violence. They create a 'kalombolombo' meaning 'practice', which involves throwing a stone on the roof of a household in which domestic violence was taking place. This act informs the abuser inside that what they are doing is known to the outside community and that they should stop or further action will be taken against them.

Attitudes are changing and neighbouring villages are also starting to take action. The mango tree, a local village meeting place, became a place where the village transformation began.

The story tells us what can happen when one person has the courage to speak out. Some people are moved to do this alone but many are able to speak because they have been supported and encouraged by others.

# Finding your voice

**Nomvula Dlamini is an experienced practitioner who has worked with herself and many others to help them find their voices. Here she reflects on what she has learnt that helps her to do this work.**

Out of the diversity of "voices" we find the richness of conversations, and out of our rich conversations spring the relationships, ideas and impulses for change. We are social beings and it is through our many voices in many conversations that we are most social. How authentic voices are brought, received, engaged with and supported makes a world of difference to the quality of conversation, to human engagement and to the contribution we each can make to processes of change.

Finding my voice is more than just finding out what it is that I have to say. Finding "my voice" is itself a conversation, with myself, an inner dialogue of the many voices that I have within me. I am a diversity of voices populated by all the people and influences in my life, each with opinions, each a part of who I am (even if I don't like it), competing to be heard, recognized and acted upon. I have to choose which voice gets "airtime" and which voice is obeyed!

I believe that the more voices I allow to be expressed, in conversations with myself, and from which I can form my own opinion, the more authentic and powerful the voice I actually bring to the world.

Most of the time the voice or voices that I express come from an unconscious or intuitive choosing. This is OK most of the time. But if I have had an unresolved relationship with a dominating father then his voice may come out first, what he would have said, and this may easily be something I regret saying. Or I may express the opposite of what he would have said as I struggle to rebel against his influence. But if I am able to bring more voices to my inner conversation, then my wisdom is enhanced by the many and the voice I choose to bring is the result of a more conscious and weighed decision, one that has a better chance of connecting to my values, what I believe to be important. This is my authentic voice.

Practically, what does this mean for social change practitioners? So often in the social processes we support or facilitate, we lead people straight into conversation with each other. The result is that those who are most resolved about their opinions or can quickly sort through their "voices", tend to dominate. Yet I have found that if I allow small, silent spaces for individuals to collect their thoughts, to give space to their own inner conversation, perhaps to write some things down or to chat to a neighbour, testing their voices, before the group starts to engage, then they are able to bring a more formed and confident opinion or contribution. This improves their participation and empowers them. If social change is about effective participation then these small moments of personal "inner conversations" are a foundation stone. Try this and see if there is a difference.

**Finding our voice:** we need to remind ourselves that it is not only about being heard; finding voice is about connecting to and thinking with others to inform new conversations.

It is therefore important that space is created for all the different voices to find expression. The conditions have to be right for all voices to be brought into direct dialogue in order to alter the power dynamics.



The power of finding voice happens when people can speak out of their own experience and this enhances their ability to learn from such experience.

Practically, it is useful to offer people in groups opportunity for a 'round' of sharing on a topic, before opening for more 'free' engagement and response. This is not simply about being sensitive to quieter people. It's an exercise in group intelligence for individuals to have to hear all that is existing in the group and encourages dialogue with the whole, rather than simple debate with one or other point. Such a practice really does help us find 'our' voice. And enables something new, and truly shared, to come to life in the group. Try this and see if there is a difference.

**Bringing voice** is a process that allows for voice to find expression in a space. In everyday life it is a diversity of voices that have to come through into a space for direct dialogue in a way that creates a 'new' story and, where possible, effect positive change. Working with diverse voices that are brought into a space demands an ability to listen to, live with and hold different narratives in a way that allows for a new, jointly created narrative to emerge.

In order to enable meaningful conversation, it is important to hold and work with the tension that manifests where diverse voices struggle to find expression, seemingly against each other. How each voice is brought depends on the place from which it is coming. When the voice comes from an experience of anger, it may be brought in a way that directs that anger in any direction, affecting and even distorting voices coming the other way. When coming from an unconfident place, the insecurity and uncertainty may easily diminish valuable messages. Yet these same angry or insecure voices can bring healthy energy or relieving honesty, if brought and received well.

Practically, it is useful, even in groups that are mostly self-managed to have a facilitator. This person is especially alert for the climate of contributions and able to hold and frame 'hot' and 'edgy' contributions. Fight and flight responses to these voices are quite normal. Having a facilitator role – even one that is mostly quiet – helps groups to receive the benefit of these voices and not silence or avoid them. Try this and see if there is a difference.

**Receiving voice** is an important dimension. How different voices are received depends on various things. Sometimes voice can be experienced as disturbing, aggressive, insulting and infuriating, but actually this may say more about the listener than the speaker. Receiving voice demands an open heart, a suspension of judgement. Indeed when our hearts are fully open we can notice and observe things that transcend the words. We can hear deeper messages that the owner of the voice may be utterly unaware of.



Receiving different voices can be a conscious act; it demands of us to be awake, sensitive and respectful. It is when our hearts are open that we can experience the humanity of others and tap hidden worlds of meaning. Try this and see if there is a difference.

**Engaging voice** and how this is done can become a driver for change. When voice is engaged with positively it can provide the impetus for transforming the power dynamics that are held in relationships. Engaging voices in conversation demands active listening for the real message that is carried, responding in a way that validates, augments, expands and even challenges what is heard – these are not mutually exclusive. From experience we are aware that engaging with voice does not always have to be a gentle process - authentic conversation often requires robust and critical engagement, but without lessening human positivity. Critical, robust conversation creates movement and brings people to a place of fresh understanding, perspective and appreciation of one another. In order to engage this voice in a meaningful way there has to be understanding, tolerance and acceptance of the other. More importantly, it demands respect for difference and otherness.

Practically, it can help to jot down notes while listening to and contributing to conversations. The temptation to react can be tempered by jotting down some thoughts ... and formulating a response that really does engage – not simply react to – the voice of others. Try this and see if there is a difference.

**Ghost voice:** in any social setting there can be dominant voices, silent voices and even the ghost voice. A ghost voice is hidden, swallowed or whispered in corners, asking the difficult questions and expressing the shadow stuff that no-one wants to admit, the issues that make the organisation uneasy and uncomfortable, especially those with power.

The power of the silent ghost voice is often underestimated. Silent voices are often associated with powerlessness but, this is often untrue. Silent voices can sometimes be the most powerful – they can shape the whole direction of conversation.

However, the ghost voice when sufficiently ignored can also become frustrated and be expressed in exaggerated and seemingly destructive ways, experienced as 'noise' by those who cannot hear what is behind it. If the voice is ridiculed it can set in motion a destructive cycle with unforeseen consequences.

> *Silent voices can sometimes be the most powerful – they can shape the whole direction of conversation.*

Social change practice which focuses on the marginalized and excluded must have focus on the ghost voice and the enormous challenges of transforming this voice into one of leadership. Often the ghost voice emerges as distraction, or as the joker; perhaps the complainer. The one who shrugs. Sometimes the ghost is even more silent than that. As facilitators and as conscious participants, how do we see what is hidden? How do we hear what is not said? Our awareness needs to extend beyond what occupies our immediate attention and reach to what is hidden. It affects how we observe and how we listen, stretching into the 'negative' spaces, into what we see in the corner of our eye, into the silence that we actively listen for. Try this and see if there is a difference.

**Writing voice:** we need to distinguish between speaking voice and writing voice. It is very challenging to me that someone with an amazingly articulate and passionate speaking voice cannot put those same words onto paper — what gets written down is often correct but lifeless, stripped of its authentic voice. How can we support people to write how they speak?

I have, in the past, ridiculed people who go to elocution lessons, and I am still not sure what they do there. But as I think of voice and the need to bring mine more authentically I wonder if we don't all need such lessons, if they can make us more conscious of our own and each other's voices, how we communicate what we really want to say and how we listen deeply for what is trying to be said. Our voices truly are gifts to nurture.

As social change practitioners, the voices of the marginalized that we seek to encourage and amplify are the most vital resource. How often we see government officials wilt when addressed and undressed by the powerful and authentic voices of community leaders who speak for the many voices that they represent. These voices are already there, hiding. How can we support their emergence and strengthening?

This chapter has looked at how individuals can initiate and support social change. The stories are quite different from each other, but each offer insights into what motivates individuals to change and how they can inspire and support others. An individual perspective can mean taking a deep look into ourselves and also learning from other individuals and their trajectories. Individuals are just the starting point for social change and they exist in their relationships with each other and with the world. We can't possibly isolate individuals from communities, groups, societies and the entire world, but we must not forget that each individual's story is important and that there are many reasons why individuals become involved in social change. We can add a layer of complexity to our analysis of social change by zooming in on individuals and seeking to understand how they relate to the bigger picture.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What are some practical things to help you find your own voice?
- What about to help bring up other people's voices?
- What can you change in your practice to help empower the ghost voices?

# Working with Questions:

## How do we See and Work with Power?

Power is held in relationships. Sometimes it is an inner struggle between different parts of ourselves, as part of a process to claim our inner power. Sometimes it is expressed in a struggle we have with others or the power we hold cooperatively with others. Sometimes it is about the power the State wields in relation to its citizens. In all cases power is a relationship process. Without relationship power means little, it has no force, for bad or for good. *If we want to shift power, we have to shift relationships.*

If in our view of ourselves we have fear, self-doubt or self-hatred we become inhibited, entrapped, or unfree. A stuck, abusive relationship with a partner can be a significant hindrance to development of a person, as can political oppression. These kinds of "unfreedoms" mutually reinforce each other and add up to a recipe for entrenched marginalization (and superiority of the other) — the core target of development interventions. An unemployed woman stuck in an abusive marriage under a political and economic system that takes little notice of her issues or voice is oppressed in multiple ways.

But the word or notion of "power" in many cultures is difficult to work with. Blatantly abusive power may appear to be the most difficult to confront but it is also the most visible and easy to name and to unite people against. In some cultures power is often veiled and hidden behind seemingly collective processes, where those with real power subtly use their influence, experience, and ability, to steer decisions in directions they like. To even suggest that there are power differentials and that they constrain development is regarded as disrespectful.

Power does strange things to the best of us. Those of us who do confront power directly often find that the harder we push, and the more we struggle, the stronger becomes the resistance to change, the more we bolster the forces we had sought to weaken. Even non-violent struggles, that bring a moral force to change, have to walk a fine line to avoid becoming threatening in a way that provokes an unwanted backlash.

In Barefoot Guide 1, Chapter 3, we distinguished between "power over" which describes the wielding of hierarchical power, "power within", which describes the inner empowerment of individuals and "power with" which describes the process of collective power, of people working or struggling together. Like the language of "Rights", the use of the language of "Power" can easily lead to polarisation and defensiveness because it often hits the truth clearly but too hard and quickly. But can we develop the language of power in a way that enlightens rather than threatens.

> *But can we develop the language of power in a way that enlightens rather than threatens.*

# Working with Questions:
## How do we See and Work with Power?

The story of EktaParishad and how they engage government, as told in Chapter 5 of this book illustrates this well:

*"During our non-violent action, our effort is to reach out to the heart of the 'other' party by making them uncomfortable but never going to the point of threatening them. For this purpose, we keep up our rhetoric at a level that conveys the urgency and importance of our agenda but never at a level which creates an environment of animosity."* — (Ravi Badri, Chapter 5, page 96)

The corrupt and powerful, who are addicted to power and money, and fearful and dismissive of others, have to be confronted with the truth of their destructive and self-destructive obsessions and fears, and either persuaded or toppled. Sometimes the powerful undermine themselves through blind stupidity. How can they be engaged in ways that do not burn down the whole country, as we see happening in Syria?

When the powerful are unseated by force, how often is their place taken by people who adopt the same behaviours, using the old regime's repressive laws and institutions to secure their new regime? Or worse, rival pretenders to the throne rush into the political vacuum and new wars begin. It did not take long for much of the hopeful and unstoppable "Arab Spring" to degenerate into nightmare scenarios of this nature.

Clearly there are distinctions to be made. Some good people lose themselves in their new power and can be persuaded away from dysfunctional uses and be helped to change and share. But more often the powerful will only change when confronted by a crisis, a transformative challenge where the *perceived costs* to themselves of holding onto power are greater than the *perceived risks* of letting go. The fall of the Berlin Wall and Apartheid both happened when a point of sanity, beyond the unsustainable insanity, was reached and the regimes were able to see the writing on the wall.

Sometimes the head follows a change of heart. Sometimes the heart follows a change of the head. In both cases the will to change has still to be transformed. Fear, doubt, hatred.

Some would focus on building alternatives rather than confrontation:

*"You never change anything by fighting existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."*

– R. Buckminster Fuller

But this choice does not always exist and can be naïve in many situations. Modern-day slaves cannot be expected to wait for alternatives to their bondage to develop. But as a part of a sustainable approach, developing alternatives can be critical. Facing climate change will require the development of alternatives but these will only flourish as viable investments when the causes of global warming are tackled and made more politically, morally, and financially costly than the powerful can stomach.

See the *Barefoot Guide 1*, Chapter 3, for more on working with power in change (The Barefoot Collective, 2008).
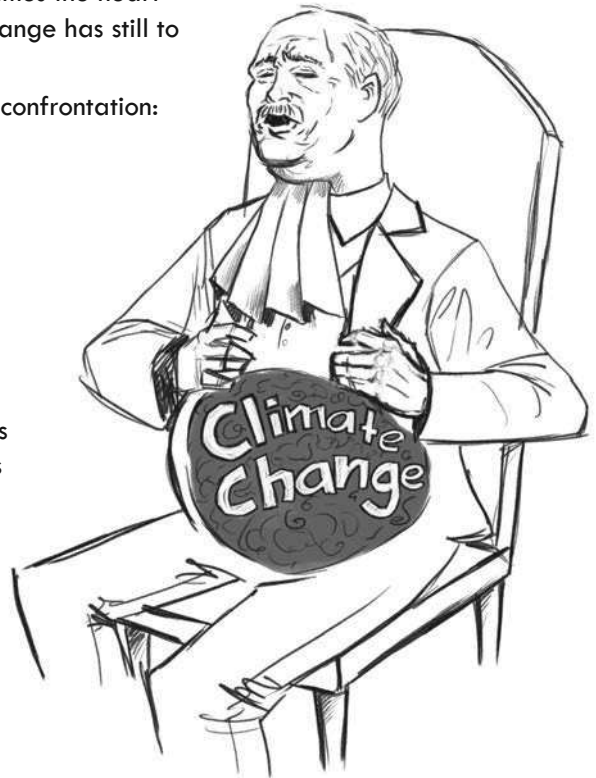
# Want the change

Want the change. Be inspired by the flame
where everything shines as it disappears.
The artist, when sketching, loves nothing so much
as the curve of the body as it turns away.
What locks itself in sameness has congealed.
Is it safer to be gray and numb?
What turns hard becomes rigid
and is easily shattered.
Pour yourself out like a fountain.
Flow into the knowledge that what you are seeking
finishes often at the start, and, with ending, begins.
Every happiness is the child of a separation
it did not think it could survive. And Daphne, becoming
a laurel,
dares you to become the wind.

Rainer Maria Rilke

English version by Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy