

Video 4

What is a Renaissance?

Part Two

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. Your colleagues around the world are very glad that you would like to be on their team.

The title of our talk today is, **What is a Renaissance? Part Two.**

During our previous talk, we defined a Renaissance as a new way of thinking. We look at the Big Picture, and we ask the Big Questions. One of those questions might be: What *could* we do if we were free from the shackles—the poverty, the pollution, the plundering, the racism, and the wars—of the 20th Century?

Let's imagine that we are in the year 2040. How old would you be? Will you have a family? What is your job, or even better, what is your career? And what does the future look like?

Let's say, now in the year 2040, that by working together for the past twenty years, we have made steady progress in our transformation from coal and oil to sunshine and wind as the fuels which power our growing global economy. In order to reduce the ravages of climate change—the droughts, the floods, the heat, the hurricanes—we should now be powering our world, in the year 2040, with 80% clean energy. 80% in the year 2040.

The heroic effort during the past two decades to achieve this transformation has created millions of jobs in the clean energy industry, from the people who design the next generation of wind turbines, to the people who build and test them, to the people who install and maintain them. Jobs harnessing the wind, jobs harnessing the sun, jobs harnessing the tides and the waves and the geothermal heat. Many, many jobs.

These jobs have brought unprecedented prosperity to the peoples of planet Earth, a prosperity shared more equally than ever before in human history. During the bad old days of oil, a private company, based in a specific country, owned the rights to its oil; these rights were protected when necessary by military forces. Now in 2040, when we leave the oil in the ground, we live in a world powered by the sun which shines down on all of us, and by the wind, which blows on all of us. We share the

power from the sun and the wind through an international grid which makes sure that every school, every medical clinic, every home, every factory, every workshop, is well lit and busy.

The sun and the wind have brought prosperity, and growing equality, and thus growing democracy, to the inhabitants of planet Earth. Children now have modern schools. Families can visit modern medical clinics and hospitals. Every year we watch, and celebrate, the steady reduction of poverty.

And because we are no longer fighting wars over oil, but instead are working together to keep our international grid humming with clean energy, we have achieved a level of peace in the world unprecedented in human history.

Yes, we are far from free from the dangers of climate change, primarily because the oceans contain an enormous amount of heat which they captured from the atmosphere during our two centuries of coal and oil pollution. But we are making steady progress in the exciting field of innovative agriculture. Desalinization plants on the coastlines of the world, powered by the sun and the wind, are turning sea water into fresh water, for irrigation, for drinking, and for washing the baby.

Solar-powered greenhouses are producing fruits and vegetables around the world. Equally important, food is distributed in an intelligent, democratic manner, so that famine has been banished from every country. No child will begin her life with years of poor nourishment; she will have the food and the vitamins and the medicine which enable her to be just as healthy as every other kid on the planet.

Now in 2040, we are working as a team to restore a flourishing level of life in the oceans. Our work began when the First Global Generation in the Human History, *you*, understood that the oceans are the key to a healthy planet. *The oceans are the key*. We all know that trees growing on land produce oxygen, which they release into the atmosphere. But marine biologists have long known that tiny one-celled plants drifting in the oceans, plants known as phytoplankton, produce between 50 and 85% of the oxygen which we breathe every day, no matter where on the planet we live.

Today, in 2040, as the oceans become warmer, due to coal and oil pollution, and as the oceans become more acidic, due to coal and oil pollution, these tiny plants lose their habitat; they lose their healthy home. They are also the bottom step of the entire oceanic food chain, feeding all the creatures above them, right up to the fish which we harvest with our big industrial nets. So as the oceans continue to become

warmer and warmer, as well as more acidic, the seas which cover 71% of our planet approach a tipping point: the phytoplankton begin to die in massive amounts, the oceanic food chain collapses, and the amount of oxygen in our atmosphere becomes steadily less and less.

We are killing the oceans. We are killing that crucially important plant life, and we are threatening all of life on planet Earth.

Even if you live in a country far from the sea, what happens in the oceans is vital to every breath that you take.

Now consider that in the year 2015, according to a study published in the journal *World Development*, governments around the world subsidized their fossil fuel industries with a total sum equal to \$5.3 trillion dollars. Governments were paying coal and oil industries to *continue* producing their poisonous fuels. The carbon dioxide pollution creates an ever-thickening blanket of greenhouse gases, which warm planet Earth. The oceans absorb both the heat and the CO₂ pollution. Carbon dioxide combines with water in the oceans to form carbonic acid: $\text{CO}_2 + \text{H}_2\text{O} = \text{H}_2\text{CO}_3$. Thus the burning of coal and oil contributes directly to the death of the tiny phytoplankton, on which so much of life on planet Earth depends.

That's what we're doing today.

Let's go back to that much brighter year in 2040. Now in 2040, the filthy fossil fuel industries have been shut down. The atmosphere which wraps around our planet has become much cleaner. Although the oceans of the world still contain an enormous amount of heat, as well as an enormous amount of carbon dioxide, the seas can now become, slowly but steadily, healthy again.

We stopped putting the crap up in the air, the air is cleaner now, and the oceans can begin to come back to life. And they will.

Why is this process—the rescue of our oceans—part of the Renaissance of the 21st Century? Because young people around the world, *you*, recognized the danger, and then responded with a multitude of non-violent strategies. Young people took a global pledge that they would never buy or even drive a vehicle fueled with oil. They would purchase only electric vehicles, and thus they forced car manufacturers around the world to build inexpensive electric cars, or go bankrupt.

Young people, you can do this. You can say, “The only car I’m ever going to buy, the only car I’m ever going to drive, is an electric car. *Period.* Within five years,

General Motors and all the other car manufacturers will be making inexpensive electric vehicles for your generation.

Thank you for that huge, powerful, non-violent strategy.

Also, by the time we reach the year 2040, young people have voted out of office any politician who supported the fossil fuel industries, and replaced them with 21st century representatives of both the people and the planet.

Young people voted.

The young people, *you*, understanding that the 21st century required new laws for a new epoch, organized a global referendum, the first in human history, a global referendum—a global *vote* held in their schools around the world—which enabled the entire world population of people fourteen years of age and older, roughly five billion people around the world, to vote on the question: Should the continued production and sale of fossil fuels be declared a crime against life on planet Earth? Yes or No.

This referendum might take place five years from now. Soon.

87% of the people of the world voted . . . Yes. Coal was a crime. Oil was a crime.

Another powerful non-violent tactic, a strategy that enables people to speak, enables people to become educated, enables people to vote.

And thus, with this referendum, we all took a big bold step forward into our Renaissance.

Young People of the World, you, you have an enormous opportunity. Weave your schools together, work with the network of experts, design a future which makes sense, and then . . . let's get to work.

Thank you.

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