

Welcome to Turning Conscience Into Action, the Earth Charter podcast. Join Mirian Vilela, Earth Charter International Executive Director, in her fascinating conversations with great thinkers, scholars and activists from around the world who are working in the fields of sustainability, ethics, education and social transformation. Our purpose is to generate new insights on how to face current global challenges and inspire informed action.

Today we have the honor, I have really the pleasure of welcoming David Orr to be here with us.

It's such an honor to have you here to share your thoughts. Thank you for joining us today, David. Oh, thank you very much for having me. It's an honor. So I'm looking forward to hear your thoughts on education and sustainability. And I would like to start by asking you, what is your take on education and learning for a more sustainable world? What are the challenges, the opportunities, and if there is a approach from your perspective on education and learning for a more sustainable world? Well, Mary, thank you so much for the opportunity to share ideas with you.

I think the challenge for all educators is to bring young people, people of all ages, into an appreciation and awareness of the natural world. And that is a subject that embraces everything else in the curriculum. How do we govern? Is it a political issue? How do we build an architectural issue? How do we farm? How do we eat? That's a huge issue. How do we power civilization? That's an enormous issue. How do we discipline our own appetites and our own lives to conform to the way the world works as a natural system?

And all of this, of course, is part of a spiritual challenge of how we define our relations, our obligations, and who we are as a people. The opportunities are huge. There are 7.5 billion humans on the planet. And there's, I think, a real hunger for people to understand the natural world. I think most people want to relate to the world, and small children certainly do. The various approaches, what would be called the pedagogy of education, I think begins certainly in a home, but in as far as this is related to schools and colleges and universities.

The approaches need to engage people with actual thinking about, which is a classroom exercise, and doing of, which is a hands-on or part and hands-on. So people need to learn how to do certain things. I had a class years ago, which was assigned the job of designing an environmental studies center, a small building that would house the Environmental Studies program here at Oberlin. And we did that as a class activity to work with architects and engineers and the people who financed buildings and so forth.

And we put together a 14,200 square foot building that was powered by sunlight, released no waste product, the standard was drinking water in, drinking water out, used no toxic or the minimum amount of toxic materials in the building, and was landscaped to be part of the local ecology. And the idea was to engage young people in the actual doing of this thing called building. From the very design and the ideas that went into the building, what's called a building program, all the way through the actual construction of it.

And that building was the first entirely solar-powered building on a U.S. college campus, which was a milestone. But more than that, what it did for students was to show that you could engage the world, you could actually do things. If you talk about climate change, that's a very big abstraction. Not sure how we will come through that challenge, but if you reduce it to the size of a single building, that is manageable. That's doable and we can understand how to do that. And so the approaches are have to, in whatever way they're done, have to engage the head, the way we think, and the divisions of the mind, the left brain and the right brain, and engage the hands, the physical capacity to do things, as well as the heart, the desire to do certain things.

So education for sustainability has to be pretty broad in content. By nature, it covers virtually everything humans do, why we do it, and how we do it. So that's the background.

And one of the things, and Mary and I will send you an article that describes this in more detail for use in the class, but we're going to think about the evolution of environmental education against the background of current politics, certainly in the United States and to a very high degree in Europe and elsewhere. But one of the things that was missing was how do we translate all of the, what we know about environment to the way we conduct the public business, the politics of the day. And these are not separate. Politics and the reality of our political life is simply another aspect of how we relate to the environment. And so several years ago, we started a project called the State of American Democracy. We published a book this past March called Democracy Unchained.

It has 39 contributors, including Bill McKibbin and Jessica Tuckman and Matthews and lots of extremely good people. And we're starting a series of online events that will begin on September 17th of this year. There'll be 10 or 11 events developed as a television show format. Oh, so it's going to be like in a webinar broadcasted online? It will be a television program.

The first one will be broadcast or developed at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. And the point of that event is to establish that the way we do our politics is really a moral issue. It defines who we are, what's important to us and how we relate to other people, including future generations. So that's the work I've gone more recently into politics. And there as the events go forward, there'll be one event per week starting on September 17th. They are professionally produced. Each one will have each episode will have two or three different segments. And as we work through the sessions, one will include constitutional issues and obligations to future generations.

And the book includes an essay by Mary Woods, who was the attorney on the Giuliani lawsuit, younger people suing the federal government on behalf of their climate rights and future generations. So we want to raise large issues in this. And so one of the questions we're asking in one of the later episodes has to do with if the founders of this country, the United States, do then back in 1787, what we know now about how Earth works as a physical system, how would they then have written a constitution and to include the idea of ecosystems, leads and lags, natural resource flows, climate change, species extinction and so forth. So there's a lot of work to do and beginning to change the way we do our public business. So anyway, that's the work I'm engaged in at the moment.

So any thoughts or questions before we go to the next part? Yeah, well, I think first is wonderful and I would like to certainly have the links and will be more than happy to promote this new program. I can see the importance of the role we place, especially I've been thinking a lot that education goes much beyond the formal education systems, no, the universities and schools and much of it is actually helping happening outside the formal education system. And therefore, this kind of program that you're mentioning certainly has an important role in reach, sometimes even more than a university, I must say. But I was happy to hear when you started by saying that one of the key challenges of education of our times is to, I would say to spark depreciation and awareness of the natural world.

And here at the university where I am, the University for Peace, we receive a lot of students from Asia. And what I have seen over the past 10 years is really this growing number of people around the world living in cities and in big cities, it's kind of the urbanized world and who are totally not familiar or don't even feel comfortable in the natural world. We have a small forest on actually our campus, tropical forest, and I normally take students there. And I can say how how challenging it is for many students to just spend time in nature. Right. Before no one feels so comfortable.

Well, it raises the issue of the way we design cities. I think one of the challenges ahead for environmental education is to understand how we design urban habitats where most of us live and will live. To accommodate parks and natural systems and riparian rights of ways for streams and rivers, but to make bring nature into the city and do it in all kinds of ways so that people nobody is more than a few minutes from a park or from a natural right of way and whether, for example, the high line in New York City is an old elevated rail line through a part of Manhattan that's been converted long unused and so they converted it to a linear park that runs on top of the rail line and provides park space for people. I want to go out for a walk and just enjoy wild flowers and they planted it with trees and so forth.

And so it has access to an urban population, has access to some parts of nature. I think that is critically important. It's hard to make nature an abstraction for people who don't deal with it. They don't live in the countryside and so forth.

So urban design is important. Definitely. And of course it's hard to make people care for nature if they don't spend time in nature. Yeah, and understanding it. It's not a frivolous thing. I mean understanding the rules of how nature works is essential to our prospectus people. As well as our happiness as people. And all the data shows that people in the natural world tend to do better than people who are enclosed in human-made spaces continually. Walking the woods lowers your blood pressure, increases your awareness of things, increases your total well-being in ways that are measurable. And so that would be surprising if it were otherwise because we were born into nature. And Mary, I also add one other thing that in terms of environmental education was very heavily about how we fit in nature.

And my concern more and more is that our ideas of citizenship are really dual. We're citizens in a political system, but we're also citizens in a natural system. And I think these are related that kind of opposite sides of the same coin. So there's work to do to join in

people's minds, join the effort to see ourselves as having that kind of dual citizenship in nature and also in a political system. Yes, yeah. It's feeling part of, not apart. Absolutely. So UNESCO has embarked in this new project. I think it's about a two-year project that's called the Futures of Education in which they are currently developing a sort of report in which they want this to be kind of a big major guide for education for the future.

And what would be your recommendation in terms of what do you think is inevitable major changes in education practice and in the dynamics in the classroom that will take place in the next 10 to 20 years? Like what do you envision that will happen in education and what should happen, what ought to happen?

One thing, and let me just mention one thing, and it goes back to a little bit of what I've said before. The setting, we typically have schools and classrooms and campuses that are and reflect the industrial world that we live in. And one of the things we did in the making of the Adam Joseph Lewis Center was to design a building that was, that fit in the natural world. It was powered by Sunshine. It released no waste product. The water was treated in a greenhouse called a living machine on site. It included easy access to the outdoors. The outdoors was partly a restoration of the landscape that had been there prior to European settlement, as well as a working landscape that had orchards and gardens and so forth.

But imagine education occurring in a setting that is designed to be as natural as possible and bring that explicitly to the thinking and the coursework of students so that they're part of a system that pays attention to its energy use, its materiality, how things are made, how they're repaired, what grows on site, the food that they eat. But imagine every school designed as an ecologically designed school, and every campus designed partly as a wild campus to include plants and animals native to the particular places. That the management of our buildings would be as natural as possible, but also the point here in short is to break down the idea that nature is over here, school is over here, we learn about nature here in a school that doesn't resemble anything about nature, and then we go out into nature.

The idea to marry the two, bring them together so that they're part parcel of the same dialogue. The space reflects the world we want to build. Absolutely, yeah. Well, the physical space is a key teacher. Right, absolutely. And you have experienced that also in higher education, because Montessori used to say that, that the importance of the physical space, how we organize and etc. But you have really had the experience of doing that in higher education. We do, and I think it changes the nature of it. We design classrooms in the Lewis Center that were day-lit from four directions. So no matter what time of day you were there, if the sun was up, there was light coming into the building from east, west, north, south.

And the use of natural materials means your students are not exposed to the off-gassing of toxic chemicals and so forth.

So there's a way, my answer here is to begin to adapt the architecture of education to the pedagogy or the learning of environment and sustainability. So the sustainability isn't just an abstraction, it's not something out there. It's built into the place in which you learn about sustainability. So it gets very, it gets down into the details of what's on the floor and how the building of the space is powered and how it's lighted and heated and what people

eat and so forth. So that's my answer. Make environment as manifest as possible and also on the entire campus.

So throughout the whole campus of a large university, the way the grounds are maintained and the buildings are maintained and the way the whole enterprise is powered to shift to entirely solar-powered and great use of efficiency.

Yeah. Now if I was a teacher in primary, secondary school or even a professor in higher education and I was not much aware or savvy in terms of sustainability into a classroom, what would be your most important advice? So I guess you already shared some of it, which is make the environment reflect as much as possible what you're teaching in terms of a nature, in our human connection with nature. But any other advice you would give me as a teacher trying to make sustainability happen or incorporate sustainability in my teaching?

The first thing comes to my mind here is to ask what is it we need to know?

At this particular point in our ecological history, we're changing the climate, sea levels are rising, species are going extinct, there are seven and a half billion of us on the planet, soon to be 10 billion, we're told. So what is it that young people need to know to live in that world and better yet to repair that world? And I don't know exactly what that is by departments, but I know that one of the things that probably needs to happen is teachers should throw out all their old notes about how they used to teach and what they used to teach about and begin to rethink this from the standpoint of how do we live in a natural system for long periods of time? That's that word sustainable and make it so there is its resilience. If something happens we're not doomed to die.

So the issue is in a way the environmental crisis isn't something out there, it starts here and how we think about the world and how poorly we think about our role in that world. So if you're an anthropologist for example, how have humans lived on this planet before? What's in their repertoire of skills and assets? What did they know about plants and animals and landscapes and waters and so forth? How did they live? What can we learn about that? If you're a political scientist as I was trained, the question is how do we do our public business in a way that we calibrate the way we do things with the way the earth works as a physical system? And the same is true in say economics.

How do we manage a how do we live in a system where the rules are four billion years old and the operating rules of the what we take to be the economy, human economy, began with in 1776. So they're less than 300 years old. So how do we do and then in the physical sciences, what is it we need to know to make the human presence fair, decent, sustainable, just and hopefully lovely? Beauty counts. Beauty counts.

So well, it's the last thing we typically think about how it looks. And so there's I think it's time to rethink the whole curriculum and ask these fundamental questions of what is it young people need? Well, all people need to know now at this particular point, we tried industrializing the planet and that hasn't worked out very well. We're wrecking the planet. So is there a different way to live on the planet? And there certainly is. And the good news, the bad news is that this requires large changes. The good news is we know how to

make these changes. If we were to say that we want to power the whole earth, the United States, Costa Rica, all of Europe, China's away by sunshine and efficiency, could we do it? And the short answer is yes, we know how to do that.

The technology already exists. So this isn't something that's alien to us. If we said, can we eat sustainably using the methods of regenerative agriculture? The answer is yes, we know how to do that. It's the will to do it. And that takes us very quickly into the politics of it. But the good news is, we know we have good alternatives. They're there. This isn't pie in the sky. So I would make the curriculum. And I think you do it at one last thing. I think most education suffers from being probably too narrow and quite often boring for students. And environmental education isn't going to be narrow. It cannot be environmental education or sustainability education to be narrow. It's got to have lots of breadth. And it certainly shouldn't be boring.

I think engaging students in as much as possible in the making of their own educational environments. So students can't design classrooms all the time or buildings. But there are always things that can be designed and built. Landscapes and farm scapes and also economic assets. I had students work on the design of a hotel that we built. It was built and opened four years ago. And all entirely solar powered. It's 105,000 square foot facility. It's rated as a lead platinum building. And students worked on that. And so sustainability becomes not something that's abstract and something way out there. It's something that's right here. It's how we live. It's how we're housed. It's how we eat. It's how we power things. Maybe this is the key challenge for teachers who are very conventional.

It's making something concrete, practical and move away from the abstraction of sustainability and showing it in a practical way by giving these in the hands of the students, probably. Right. And I would modify an earlier comment I made in one way. I don't think it means throwing babies out with the bathwater, so to speak. I think what it means is beginning to adapt, for example, if one teaches classics about Roman and Greek civilization and so forth. Can parts of that be adapted to the issues of sustainability? And I think the answer is yes.

We need that kind of perspective. Can you adapt history to the study of sustainability? And again, the answer is yes, absolutely. To understand the ecological evolution of humankind is an important subject. So people who are conventionally educated and so forth is fine. The question for them is what part of what I know is relevant to this particular time in human history? And I don't think it's too much to say that, excuse me, that if you run the film that we're currently making fast forward, there's no happy ending. Humankind is, we're coming up against hard limits and there's not much time. And so throughout all of this, there needs to be a sense of real urgency and also excitement.

And the word you used in the questions, there are opportunities here for tremendous human growth and for doing things that are incredibly exciting. We need all the creativity we can muster from students and help encourage. And part of our role is to basically validate students, to give them permission to do things that relate to their future. And there isn't really, I'm off the subject here, but there isn't really a line of work that I can think of that does not in some way include environment. So if a young person wants to go into

business or law or medicine, all of those need to be careers that have an environmental focus. Environmental law is worth a lot of attention. You have to do a lot of work on that.

Environmental medicine, certainly at an age of pandemics, global pandemics, environmental medicine is critically important. Businesses, how do we provision ourselves with things that we want, including computers, carpets, housing, and materials? How do we make these things in a way that doesn't destroy the natural world? So there isn't a career line that I can think of that is left out. And I will also include in that art, how do we render? How do we begin to see the world as art and how that informs our behavior and our situation? That's beautiful. That's actually beautiful.

Well, for me, I see one of the challenges here is for people who are not in the science or natural science field, see the connection between whatever field they are in international law or engineering business, to see sustainability and issues of environment that is not just for those who like to talk about this, just not for those who are experts in environment education or experts in sustainability. I see that that is also, but I like the way you started by saying, well, it's starts in our mind, in our mindset, the way we see the world and the connections. Now, if we may, if I may ask you to share some thoughts or give an overview even in some of your writings. So I see so many people have read you and you have influenced many, including me, from your writings.

In 92, you wrote something about ecological literacy and in 2005, too, both on ecological literacy.

Just that in 92, it was education and the transition to a postmodern world. In 2005, it was ecological literacy, educating our children for a sustainable world. Would you share with us just some thoughts on overview of what you mean by ecological literacy and how your thoughts have changed maybe from 92, 1992 and 2005 on the same theme, ecological literacy?

Sure. I've written eight books and edited four or five others. The first two that you mentioned, ecological literacy and earth and mine were mainly focused on education and the scope and content of education. The next several books, including design on the edge, which was about the making of the Lewis Center, that was published by MIT Press. The nature of design, those were focused on how we make the human presence in the world. We're the focus primarily on architectural design and landscapes, not so much on materials. I've written a couple of books on climate change, one down to the wire, which was an Oxford University Press book. The other one was called Dangerous Years, which was published by Yale University Press in 2016. The last book I've written or edited is called Democracy Unchained.

It's a collection that came out of a conference that we did at Oberlin after the election of 2016. The question we were asking at that event was, how did we get into that situation? We assemble a group of 30-some writers and thinkers.

It was by Jane Mayer from New Yorker and Tim Egan from New York Times and Reverend William Barber, the founder of Moral Mondays and the Poor People's Campaign. That was like looking through the rear view mirror. How did we get into our situation that

is a long into making? It isn't just the current present. It's been building for a long time. Then the book is an attempt to look effectively through the windshield, look forward. How do we respond to this? How do we get out of this?

It's a curious thing because in some ways our situation with the pandemic is a reflection of a failure of democratic institutions. Then looking ahead, if we take our eyes off the immediate circumstances and look at a little further horizon, on that horizon there's climate change. Climate change will test every aspect of American and global society. It will stress our bonds between each other. It will stress our international systems. It will force people to flee. The environment is no longer habitable like Central America becoming or Syria a few years ago as farmers facing drought had to leave their farms. What we're aiming to do in this current book and then the 11 events that will follow this fall is to ask these bigger questions of first of all, can democracy survive this?

I think the answer that we're given is yes. It can survive it, but more than that it can help us deal with these kinds of issues. The point is that democratic societies are the only societies that say to you and me and everybody that's watching this that your life counts and you ought to have a say in how you're governed, who governs you, and to what purposes. What's this nation or this town about? Your opinions matter, but I can't imagine any other political system dealing with these kinds of issues of pandemics to climate change, species extinction. The hard part about that is this.

It requires that what we've been talking about in environmental education is built into the mindset, the way young people think, that they are citizens, yes, of a political community, but they're also citizens of a natural world.

So there's this dual citizenship and for both you have to be informed. You have to know something. You have to be competent about what you know about the environment. And for both you have rights and responsibilities. Absolutely, absolutely. And there are flip sides of the same coin. The rights that you have depend on your exercise of responsibilities and that civic ecological community depends on people who just know a lot and that's why the burden of the human future rests heavily with educators. We have to raise up very quickly a generation of young people as leaders who are civically competent and ecologically literate. And so much of the human future really does depend on that work of teachers. So it's not the 18th item on the list of priorities.

It's the first item. It's the most important thing. The ecological crisis is a crisis of how we think. It's not a crisis out there. It's not a crisis of technology and economics first and foremost. Those are clearly part of it. But the crisis begins and how we think about the human role in the natural world. So more is my, rights have gone on more and I'll send you a couple of essays I've written just recently. One is a sequel to the, which is a chapter in dangerous years, but it's a sequel to what is education for.

What you mentioned about linking it with the political role we have as educators and as learners, makes me think about the Paulo Freire Institute in Brazil has a project on the eco, pedagogical and political role of the school. The school has a role to empower and raise awareness not only of those inside the school, but those who are in the community around the school. Right. Well, Paulo Freire's great contribution was in pedagogy depressed

was to show that if you can't say something, if you can't articulate your problem or your human role, you can't solve it and teaching people to be articulate about the things that afflict them. And of course in environment, how is it we get environmentally driven cancers to be able to say that and to describe the linkages?

How is it we suffer a massive epidemic of obesity but also the destruction of the land over production of food, excess nitrogen and ecosystems, dead zones, 200 and some dead zones around the world where there's no life in the seas for hundreds of square miles. And so to be able to verbalize all of this is really important.

This is the task of educators. And I think one other thing, Mary, we haven't, I haven't mentioned here, Costa Rica is a shining example of a society that doesn't depend on military.

And that is an example for all of us. I live in the United States where we spend a trillion dollars a year on weapons and war fighting. That money could be spent in so many other absolutely useful things. And I don't think there's a way to become sustainable, a decent way to become sustainable and resilient and fair and just if war making is or is at that level. I think we have to learn a whole different way to relate to each other. Costa Rica is way out in the forefront of that. But the peace movement has got to be, we've got to be competent at making peace and understanding how to resolve conflicts. And that's not an easy challenge, but we have to learn to work past our animosity.

We live in a world where a lot of people hate each other for sometimes for long historical reasons, but most often because of differences of sect and religion and political party. And we have to, one of the elements of, this again is a different way to think about environmental education. It's got to be about peacemaking, peacemaking with nature and peacemaking with each other. And those also are kind of opposite sides of the same coin. But the task of educators is a large one, but I think it's basically to teach young people to ask the right questions, not give them answers so much, is to ask the right questions. There's an old Islamic tale called the Tale of the Jinn, J-I-N-N. And in the Tale of the Jinn, humans are on trial. We're in the dock.

And the jury box consists of animals, birds and crocodiles and snakes and tigers who are given voice, they can speak, and sentience, they can think like we do. And so the question to the jury is, what case can be made for humans to survive? And I used to have my students read that, Tale of the Jinn, and then ask them, were they the attorney for the human race? What case could they make for human survival?

And the first response was off, and oh, there's no case you can make for human survival. We're all doomed and bad and so forth. And then they began to rethink it. And as they think through, they realize that, wow, humans have written some amazing poetry and made amazing music and done some awfully powerful philosophical thinking and made beautiful buildings. And so there's a case to be made for humans. But the point of that exercise was to get them to understand that if we knew better why we deserve to be sustained, we would know better how to go about sustaining ourselves in ways that were fair, decent, and just and peaceful, as laid out in the Earth Charter. And so the default

setting then becomes the kind of philosophical work that's in *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis, wonderful book, or the Earth Charter.

And it becomes the default setting. It's how we think. And it makes it much harder to be unsustainable and to be prone to war and to violence. Sounds wonderful. So David, in a nutshell, what is ecological literacy for you? I was afraid you were going to ask that. If I don't know nothing about that, and I would like you to convince me or to make me fall in love with the importance of ecological literacy. What is that? Well, I think if I was writing that book, which was written 28 years ago, or published 28 years ago, I would possibly not use ecological literacy because it implies reading. And I think reading is very important. I'm a big reader, and I think it's important to be able to say things and be littered in that sense. But it means a competence and affection for the world around us and our role in it.

And competence embraces reading, the knowledge that we get from reading books. But it also includes the knowledge, experience, and affection we derive from being in nature, the walk in a park or the walk in a forest or time spent at the seashore or on rivers and lands and forests. But without that, we're part of nature and nature is part of us. There's an indissoluble, excuse me, link between the two. So ecological literacy is developing the affinity for the natural world. And part of that is head, the analytical part, part of it is head, the feeling part, part of his hands are competence and part, much of it is our heart and how we feel.

It's a process of inducting young people into full citizenship in the natural world. It sounds so perfect. It's so much aligned with our approach to our pedagogical approach here, in terms of how to use their shouting education using the whole. It's not just about the cognitive learning, but it's the emotional heart, the connection with nature. So very much aligned. Thank you so much. First in mind, when you wrote that in 2004, on reflecting on the relationship of education, environment, and the human prospect, can you share some thoughts on that?

The, it was written as a loving critic of the education process. I had been in and around higher education since I was five years old. And I think the loving part comes from the idea of, I've been exposed to great teachers and people who loved the things that they taught, whether it was Shakespeare or biology or chemistry or whatever, they love the subject matter. And that, the great teacher is a person whose love for their subject matter comes through.

The part of me that was critical was in a way how we carve up the learned world into bits and pieces. And so there are, it's like a mailbox pigeonhole system. There are little boxes here. And well, that one's anthropology and this one's sociology, but the two don't much talk.

And so the critical part was in our tendency to fragment the world and trying to understand how we make it whole again, how we bring this in, because we experience it whole. I don't experience anthropology. I can read books about it, but I don't experience anthropology or political science. I can engage in political activity, but that's different. And so the idea was to begin to rethink, the idea that runs through the book is the idea of rethinking how we induct the mind and the life of the mind into active stewardship of the

world. And excuse me. The way we do it is also too competitive. If I think of the totality of everybody watching this, we are again a combination of hand, heart, head, and we carve those up. And so education starts here, works up and then dismisses half of that.

And if women for a long time, for example, were disadvantaged in education because they were accused of being emotional, well, emotion, we evolved with emotions for very good reasons that tied our activities to certain values that were important. Parents who are emotional about the well being of their kids, well, yes, that is emotional, but that's appropriate to guarding their safety and their health and so forth. The rational mind is important also, but rationality left to itself takes us, I think, to bad places like Auschwitz. Emotionality by itself takes us to ineffectiveness. So it's the combination of the two that make it important.

But education that begins to connect the parts of the brain and then introduces us to practical competence, some of the best thinking I've ever seen done was done by people who were wrestling physically with a real problem, how to build, how to grow something, how to make something happen.

It was physical and required a strong integration between thinking and the doing part. And the heart is how we apply that to what end do we do these things? To what end do I have a career?

What do I do and how do I think? I used to ask students in my design class a question about what do you want if you could design your tombstone? What do you want on your tombstone? And of course, at 18 to 22, the idea that you're going to die is kind of a new idea, you know, what I'm going to die, nobody told me that. But the idea of seeing a life unfold and you're the author or the architect or the sculptor of your own life. And so how do you want that to read? That's a matter of heart. How do I attach all of my skills and talents and energies to what cause? And we have a, we've had this national mission in the United States and the increasingly all around the world of growing the economy. Well, to what end? What does an economy do?

And beyond some point, an economy can become too big. And the same questions need to be asked, routinely, but to what end is this particular activity, my career? And so my advice to students has been very often get what used to be called a calling. Why you're here on on earth, what's the purpose of your life? And then you'll find a career in that. But if you find the career first, what do I want to do without asking a question? Who I want to be? And what's the, what is my larger purpose in the world gets the cart and the horse in the wrong relationship?

And the first question to ask is really the calling question. Who am I? What are my skills? What are my gifts? What do I want to, what difference do I want to make in the world? And then the second question, it wants you to establish that you can find the career is much easier to find. But I've known an awful lot of people who at midlife or from midlife on had a nagging feeling that they hadn't lived very well. They didn't, they didn't follow a calling. And some had been very successful in a career, but realized almost too late that that was effort badly applied. So enough said on that, but I think that there, there's an important issue about how education works relative to the lifespan of young people.

And to summarize that, we've equipped a lot of young people over many years for jobs and employment in a world and an economy that was not sustainable, could not be sustained. And in many ways should not have been sustained because it was unjust and unfair and destructive. And so the question, these are large questions and I think education ought to help young people think this through. The root of the word education means to reduce, to draw forth. And so being able to draw forth from young people, the inner vision that is within them of what do I want to do with this one wild, crazy life that I have is Mary Oliver, the poet once said. That is the question.

And education is the, our role as educators is to help young people ask that question and then find a path that we would validate, that we say, that's okay, you can do that. You don't have to be like me or like your parents, you have this life to live. So this question of what do you want to do with this one wild, crazy life that you live is important. I mean, it is the important question.

Then all the other questions, whether you take history, 232 or chemistry, 421 or all the other choices you make are sub choices below that one, one large question of what do I do with this energy that I call my life. This is beautiful. And unfortunately, because there's no much space to reflect on this, people are going to higher education and basically to have a job, to have a better job. It's very shallow and mostly because of lack of space to reflect on these deeper questions. They are much needed. The Earth Charter and or instruments such as the Earth Charter, what do you think is the relevance of something like the Earth Charter to current times and into education? Well, there's a whole curriculum in the Earth Charter.

And as I said before, the Earth Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Dotto C by Pope Francis are three, in my mind, of the most important documents of our time, maybe of all time.

And the Earth Charter summarizes so neatly and concisely all of the elements of a world that works and can be sustained in ways that are just, fair, and decent and beautiful. And so it is a wonderful document for that. And you could, if you were designing a curriculum from scratch, I can think of no better documents than those three to work with. If humans matter, if human dignity matters, how then do we educate? What do people need to know to treat others with dignity and fairness? And what's the knowledge that we need to bring to bear building a world in which they're fed and housed and schooled and so forth, decently. And so your charter is a magnificent document. I think in a world of too much darkness, it was like a bolt of lightning on a dark night.

It lit the terrain of our time to see what we could do. So in most ways, it's an aspirational document, but so too is the Dotto C. This is what we could be. And humans always need something that takes us our eyes off our feet and to a farther horizon. So that farther horizon is one we hope we grow into of justice and fairness, sustainability, resilience, and also again, a world that is beautiful. I think the world that is all those first four has got to be beautiful.

And so the way we design, the way we build should be designed and built, even institutions and ways that draw forth our feelings for beauty and harmony and justice and fairness.

So enough said on your charter, it's one of the seminal documents, maybe the seminal document of our time. Well, thank you so much, David. Thank you for spending this time with us and sharing your wisdom, thoughts, and experience. It has been very inspiring. And I feel I could spend hours and days just chatting with you. Thank you. Very exciting. Thank you. Thanks to all the students.

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