**West Bloomfield Declaration**

**January 8, 2018**

This is a crucial decision point in human history. We face unprecedented threats to our country, and even to human civilization itself.

Whatever happens, we will experience great change: a great **discontinuity**.

The stories about America that we have all grown up with, **cultural stories** of who we are, of endless growth and progress, are beginning to fail dramatically. Making continuous adjustments to keep the status quo intact is leading us to failure.

But our unprecedented threats are matched with unprecedented **opportunities**. World-wide connectivity is bringing about awareness of our predicament, and of global interdependence, and giving us tools to work together. Present politics is energizing urgent discussion.

A **new story** is emerging, away from resource depletion, endless strife, and accelerating disparity between the richest and everyone else.

What should this new story look like? Where should we go from here? As a country, and as humankind, what is the successful human future we want?

A small group of ordinary citizens met in West Bloomfield, NY during 2017 to discuss these questions, and capture our consensus beliefs.

This **West Bloomfield Declaration** describes what we believe the **new story** requires:

**Climate**: We must treat climate change as our first national security priority. Slowing use of fossil fuels is not enough. We must intentionally, quickly and practically transition to practices that draw down greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere. Climate remediation requires global cooperation.

**War**: Global cooperation requires diplomacy, mediation, arbitration, and legislation to resolve international disputes. We and our leaders must recognize that the war system is a cultural, educational, economic, political, psychological, destructive, immoral, and dangerous waste of resources.

We reject the killing of human beings.

We require systems that ban building, owning, storing, transporting, using, or threatening to use nuclear weapons.

We support national service to give young people a role in creating the cooperative future.

**Population:** Human civilization is crashing into resource and environmental constraints. We must be aware of Earth’s human carrying capacity and population. We must plan for every child to be wanted, loved, and cared for.

**Freedom**. We must honor and protect the freedom of all to read, write, speak, worship, believe, associate, congregate, marry, work, trade, invent, innovate, play, and move about within the bounds of good citizenship.

We recognize that with freedom comes responsibility. Society has a duty to provide its citizens with healthy living conditions including clean air, clean water, physical security, and a sustainable climate.  Public policy must support basic human rights for all.

**Democracy**. Because our republic derives its just powers from the consent of the governed, the integrity of our electoral process is crucial.  Elections at all levels must be fair and free from outside influence.  Election district lines must be protected from manipulation. Vote counts must be independently verifiable. No citizen shall be denied the right to vote.  We must encourage citizens to become candidates for elected office by supporting public campaign financing.

**Corporations** are not people, and do not have the constitutional rights of people. Corporations must be prevented from contributing to political campaigns, or otherwise interfering with the electoral process. Corporations must consider environment, employees, and community as well as profit.

**Our new internal stories:**

**Cooperation** in the outside world requires integrity of our inner worlds. We respect the process of science, including observation, reason, and the realistic humility of recognizing that even our most cherished understandings may be wrong. Therefore we listen to diverse opinions.

Remembering that each person lives in a different world, with different experiences, beliefs and understandings, we make a deliberate effort to consider other people’s views.

We recognize a responsibility to consider whether information we are exposed to may be false, incomplete, or intentionally misleading.

**Virtues**. We prize decency, cleanliness, health, purity, simplicity, honesty, trustworthiness, hard work, self reliance, doing our share, individual initiative, and fairness. To these traditional virtues we now add helping to invent and create a positive human future. We must live in ways that benefit future generations, and leave the planet better than we found it.

As Americans, we commit to America being a force for good in the world, leading by good example. We want every country to set the best example it can.

**Oneness**. We are all in this together. Our positive future requires recognizing everyone as valuable. Treating others as less deserving than ourselves (“othering”), the politics of attacking, denigrating and demonizing, endangers the cooperation we need. Othering, just like extreme poverty, threatens human solidarity.

**Action!**  When neighbors talk together, seriously considering what might be the best way forward for community, country and planet, far-ranging agreements are possible. We must consider problems themselves, not just symptoms of problems.

The unprecedented availability of information allows us individually to be aware of and impact the way things are happening in the world.

Now is the time for neighbors and other citizens to come together to discuss the future we want. We are not experts. We are not rich. But the time has come for ordinary people like ourselves to have a say in creating public policy.

Let groups of citizens talk seriously about what the future requires, and let the will of the people restore democracy!

**Agreed by:**

Munir Bahai

Paul Hudson

Corey Keyes

Ron Knight

Dianne Marcellus

Mary Neale

Reg Neale

Mike Rudnick

Hank Stone

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*This West Bloomfield Declaration describes what our group believes is needed to go forward from here.*

*We recognize that many Americans continue to enjoy a secure and prosperous way of life under our present system. Many, including those making public policy, see no point in changing direction.*

*But we see significant problems which have not been solved by “experts,” or elected officials, or the wealthy, or corporations, or the military, or religious organizations.*

*Our group has no particular expertise or authority. We don’t have all the answers, but we have demonstrated that small groups of people, starting from different points of view, can talk seriously and cooperatively about what the future requires. This is not the last word, but a baby step toward community discussions from which democratic action may emerge.*