

Resilience and Possibility

**Excerpts from an interview with
Bill and Lynne Twist,
Founders of Pachamama Alliance
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Mario Trigueros

I'd love from your perspective, what do you see unfolding right now? Where are we? Whether the we is capital, we humanity, or we is even Pachamama Alliance. I'd love to get your sense of where we are right now and what's possible.

Bill Twist

This year in particular, I'd say we're in a much deeper inquiry. We are in a deeper inquiry than we've been in past years. One of the things I pride ourselves in doing at Pachamama Alliance is always questioning, always looking at, is what we're doing the most effective thing? Are we doing something that's additive, that's new? Can we do things that are additive or new? That's what we're trying to do – not just do things that other people are doing – but to really look at what's needed and wanted. And for me, this year or the last year, and up to this year, we're in a different domain of confrontation as humanity than we've been in the past.

The story over and over again, you hear now, both from the issue of climate change, but also the meta-crises we're in -- species extinction, toxins in the environment, loss of biodiversity, growing inequality. It's being projected now that if we continue on the path we're on, our extinction is actually a real possibility – extinction of the human family. And, certainly there would be many other species with it. That's really sobering. That's a sobering realization. So, you know, what do you do about that – to get out of that?

What we're hearing from Indigenous people is sort of, I, the, the classic thing. I think it was Einstein that said that we can't solve the problems we're facing with the level of thinking that got us there. The Indigenous people are saying, if you don't learn to listen to spirit. If you don't learn to listen to the wisdom of the universe, you're not gonna solve this thing. So for me, we're in a deep inquiry about what we're doing as an organization. And given the seriousness of that, given the reality of it, we're really looking at, okay, what should we, as Pachamama Alliance, be doing?

The people we talk to, when you look at that conundrum we're in, most thoughtful people who've really looked at it, say, well, the only way you get out of this is a total transformation of the human species and in a generation. And that transformation, somehow, in most people's conception of it, who we talk to, it means that somehow the human species acquires, adopts a shared story as to why we're here, why we're here in the universe. And also the human species clearly ends up learning to live, learning to listen to spirit, learning to listen to the wisdom of the

universe. So we're in an inquiry, okay: let's look at our work. Is our work up to that? Are the things we're doing up to that challenge?

So we are, we are examining everything now. I'd say the one additional thing that we're doing is almost like we did years ago when we created the Awakening Dreamer program. We kind of pulled groups of people together and started thinking of how the Indigenous people told us that they wanted us working with them. That was great. But they said, your real work, your real work is to change the dream of the modern world.

So we're looking at how do you get from where we are now, within humans in a rival relationship with each other and with the earth. How do you get to where humans are in a mutually enhancing relationship between humans and earth? That's a huge leap. And it's daunting, and, it is like you can't really figure how to get in, how to engage in it. But we're looking at how to engage that. Is there a way – can we come up with something? And that's something that we're just starting to get involved in, and it's something that we don't see anybody else doing. We don't see anybody else having that inquiry really in a way that maybe some new Earthshot ideas could come out of that. So that's another aspect of what we are doing now.

Aryeh Shell

Lynne, as you pick up the mantle here, I'm curious what you're hearing, like how you're opening to listening and what's coming to you, or through you? And what are you hearing from our Indigenous partners about what is most essential for us to focus on right now?

Lynne Twist

Here we are at the decisive decade, 2024, almost halfway through the decisive decade when so much absolutely must happen regarding the climate crisis to meet the moment. And we're not standing powerfully enough. I don't mean Pachamama now. I mean, all of us in the world are not standing powerfully enough to reverse this climate crisis. It's completely and totally reversible. We know that from the Drawdown work. We know it from Paul Hawken's beautiful book Regeneration. We know it because we created it. It's not something that a meteor did. A meteor did not hit the earth. We are the meteor. So we created it, and we can reverse it. We can end it. And to not stand for that, to be talking about how to mitigate it, or make it not so bad is insane.

We need to catapult ourselves into an evolutionary leap. And then also, I'll just say, it's really about restoring our climate to a livable climate. Ending the climate crisis means restoration, regeneration, restoring, as Peter Fiekowsky, who I see on the screen writes about, to a livable climate. We can do that. It'll never maybe be the same, but it'll be a livable climate. So, we need to respond to that, and we need to respond to it with what we know so well in the DNA of the Pachamama Alliance: a stand, an unyielding, uncompromising stand to create an ecological civilization. I mean, we can't do anything less. It's not like we have a choice. to bring into existence a whole nother level of an evolutionary leap. Nothing less than that. How do we do that? I don't know. But we can commit to it, and we, we commit to it. We'll find our way.

Ending human supremacy, which is a misunderstanding of who we are and why we're here has become a core way of seeing how to move forward. So in many ways, this inquiry, which we're in for the whole year of 2024, Pachamama Alliance, is initiating a series of convenings and inquiries into this idea, this commitment, I'll call it insight. That if we actually take a look at the damage we've done as thinking we are supreme over all forms of life and the earth, and addressing that directly, would mean to transform human supremacy into human responsibility and sacred reciprocity with each other, the community of life and the earth herself. So, transform human supremacy into human responsibility and sacred reciprocity with the community of life, one another, and the earth herself.

It's bigger than ending the climate crisis, really, but it will end the climate crisis. It will end the climate crisis, which is a function as is all of our maladies, of our arrogance, our hubris, our thinking we are supreme in some way. That's not really true. And really understanding what we are doing here. We do make a difference. Human beings are not meant to go extinct. We have a role to play, but to find our rightful role is an extraordinary challenge. And I think the right work to be done.

Aryeh Shell

There can be some of us who feel like that seems impossible. Can we actually do that in time? Is it too late? And if you can, speak a little bit to that question that I think many of us are holding in our spirits of can it be done? And what's needed?

Lynne Twist

People say, what do you think is gonna happen and what do you predict? And what do you see is possible? I don't actually even entertain that. I'll just say, myself, I stand for transformation. I'm not predicting it. I'm standing for it. And when I look at history, you know, I lived through at my age and I know the age of many of us here. We saw the Civil rights movement. We participated in it, I did. We saw the women's movement just rise. And we saw the end of Apartheid, and we saw the Berlin Wall fall. Those things happened because someone stood so firmly, and no matter what the evidence was that it was impossible, they stayed deeply rooted in the possibility. And, you know, you think about Churchill during the war; you think about Martin Luther King or Gandhi, people who've really taken a stand never doubt their stand or predict anything, they just stand there absolutely unyielding. And that creates a clearing. And that also gives a person's life meaning. And it also creates a particular way of being so that everything you do is oriented toward and around what you stand for. And your very actions become consistent with what you're standing for. And then you don't even need to know how to get there because you are already there, and your actions are consistent with what you stand for.

Christiana Figueres, who's my new mentor, she calls it not just grounded optimism, which I'm very, very familiar with, and I talk about that in the Game Changer Intensive, as you know, if you've taken that. But she calls it stubborn optimism. She says what we need now is stubborn optimism, stubborn optimism. And I've become a stubborn optimist.

Bill Twist

The question of, it sounds so daunting. For me, that we are clear enough that we know where we need to get a total transformation of humanity – That's clarity. It wasn't like until we saw that we need a total transformation of humanity, where humans become, as Lynne was saying in her add-on to ending human supremacy. If we can envision that then we can start thinking how we would embody that in our lives, and then we can make a commitment to figuring out how to get there. That's all we need to do. That's what's needed. Stand for it. The end is in sight. The end is in sight. We'll figure out how to get there. Spirit will help us figure out how to get there. So, and it, but it takes us embodying it in our... and the beauty is we can all embody that in our own hearts and our own lives then too. It'll be one of the most rewarding and inspiring and expanding journeys we could go on.