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# Change The Story, Change The Future: A Living Economy For A Living Earth



## Synopsis

We humans live by stories, says David Korten, and the stories that now govern our society set us on a path to certain self-destruction. In this profound new book, Korten shares the results of his search for a story that reflects the fullness of human knowledge and understanding and provides a guide to action adequate to the needs of our time. Korten calls our current story Sacred Money and Markets. Money, it tells us, is the measure of all worth and the source of all happiness. Earth is simply a source of raw materials. Inequality and environmental destruction are unfortunate but unavoidable. Although many recognize that this story promotes bad ethics, bad science, and bad economics, it will remain our guiding story until replaced by one that aligns with our deepest understanding of the universe and our relationship to it. To guide our path to a viable human future, Korten offers a Sacred Life and Living Earth story grounded in a cosmology that affirms we are living beings born of a living Earth itself born of a living universe. Our health and well-being depend on an economy that works in partnership with the processes by which Earth's community of life maintains the conditions of its own existence—and ours. Offering a hopeful vision, Korten lays out the transformative impact adopting this story will have on every aspect of human life and society.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In Jonathan F.P. Rose's essay "A Transformational Ecology" in the book "Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril" edited by Kathleen Dean Moore and Michael P. Nelson, Rose writes: "The root cause of the ecological issues we face arises from our definition of self." The conveyance

of that definition is the largely unspoken story of collective identity that makes any given culture coherent and meaningful to its members. And the story that now prevails in the world is a story of human separation, exceptionalism, competition and entitlement. From this story, we who live by it have, over some ten millennia, crafted the dominant non-viable global industrial economic/political order that is now laying waste to the world in the name of progress and profits. David Korten's book "Change the Story, Change the Future" tackles the tremendous challenge of trying to imagine not just a different economic/political order and a different underlying story, but also a different, viable, definition of self. His vision goes beyond economics, beyond any given discipline to the common conceptual frame that informs them all. And he does it with beauty, clarity and brevity that makes the truly transformational ideas he has to offer refreshingly accessible to readers of all persuasions.

Having long taught David C. Korten's THE GREAT TURNING: FROM EMPIRE TO EARTH COMMUNITY in my Writing about Human Frontiers college course, I am eager now to add CHANGE THE STORY, CHANGE THE FUTURE to my syllabus because it even more explicitly and persuasively establishes that maintaining Earth's viability is our sacred duty.

I found out about this book from The Next System Project. I give this book five stars for its accuracy in diagnosing the problem with society. The author gives a cogent argument why an economy and culture centered on money and controlled by multinational corporations are destroying the planet and our future. I also agree that a new frame is our only option for change, to take away the corporate framing pushed by the oligarchy. However, I simply could not accept the story the author put forth as the new frame that will save us all. First off, the author made it sound like he came up with a totally new worldview, calling it the "Sacred Life and Living Earth story". In reality, this story concept is simply reworked taoism. From wikipedia: Taoist philosophy proposes that the universe works harmoniously according to its own ways. When someone exerts their will against the world, they disrupt that harmony. Taoism does not identify one's will as the root problem. Rather, it asserts that one must place their will in harmony with the natural universe. Thus, a potentially harmful interference must be avoided, and in this way, goals can be achieved effortlessly. "By wu-wei, the sage seeks to come into harmony with the great Tao, which itself accomplishes by nonaction." I am a taoist myself and believe this message to be true, but I am not under any illusion that people from different faiths will agree with the tenets of taoist philosophy. I think a better approach would be to boil down the point of his story to a basic, self-evident truth, and then to "de-frame" according to the person's belief structure (if a monotheist, hammer away at the "caretakers of the earth" idea, if

Buddhist, that one should embrace action to save the earth). He does a good job giving the counterarguments to each religious viewpoint; these should be used. I think the basic, self-evident truth that he is reaching for is better represented by Nassim Taleb's book on antifragility. Antifragility is a fundamental approach to viewing the world, but doesn't quite reach to the status of a religion or story. It is a simple concept that applies to most anything, and is not as much of a reach for both non-taoist religious or for atheists. And once you have heard the concept, you can't help but see the world differently.

David Korten has been one of my heroes and indirect mentors through his books for over a decade. His book *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community* resonated deeply with me, and I completely agree that the premise of that book, to wit, people are the new (restored) super-power actualized through local resilience and global community. This book takes on great importance as we reflect on the United Nations and its Sustainability Development Goals (SDG), combined with The Most Holy Father agreeing to visit the UN in September to deliver an encyclical that has been leaked, on climate change. This book can be considered the middle book, the book that brings a largely unconscious public, generally poorly read, up to speed with "the new story." It is not a new story, as one reviewer archly observes, it is in fact the original story harking back to a time when our indigenous ancestors respected the Mother Earth, observed plants and animals as co-equal intelligence, forgot nothing through oral history, and generally acted as stewards of the earth. One of the best books showing before (Mayan, Aztec) and after (guns, germs, steel) is *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*. As I read through this book -- starting with the index and notes as I usually do with books I know are vital -- I was stunned to see the author include me in the notes for the first chapter, and more specifically the profile of me by Nafeez Ahmed, then a Guardian author and also the author of the very important *A User's Guide to the Crisis of Civilization: And How to Save It*. What David Korten does not say in his note is the the overview I provide is a very explicit *Graphic: Preconditions of Revolution in the USA Today*, easily found online by searching for the post title. I could not be more pleased, and will also say, as a "Naked Truth" kind of guy who had to attend the Findhorn Summit on "The New Story" to better appreciate the limitation of the Naked Truth approach, that I appreciate this book all the more for having learned over the years that the facts simply will not make the case -- the public needs a story. I am moderately encouraged by this book and by signs I see of both emerging public power and emerging new open source everything technologies. What I do not see in this book is true cost economics. I am working my way through a book that complements this one, by my former political

science professor Charles Bednar, *Transforming the Dream: Ecologism and the Shaping of an Alternative American Vision*, and I see already that the books go well together. The latter makes the point that our techno-industrial paradigm is at the end of its useful life, and a new paradigm, ecologism (based on the work of Herman Daly, among others, see especially *For The Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future*). This past week it was my privilege to be the primary expert in residence for a NATO workshop on strategic foresight -- I have published my interventions at Phi Beta Iota the Public Intelligence Blog as "NATO Strategic Foresight Wrap-Up" and anyone can gain an account at the Innovation Hub -- and our general conclusion is totally consistent with what David Korten is saying that Charles Bednar and others (Richard Wolf, *Occupy the Economy: Challenging Capitalism* (City Lights Open Media) Peter Linebaugh, *Stop, Thief!: The Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance* (Spectre) for example) are saying: the old paradigm is dead -- it is toxic. The new paradigm must focus on humanity, on life, on sustainable development. The time has come to abandon the scientific reductionism (cf. *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West*) and the merger of political and financial crime (cf. *Griftopia: A Story of Bankers, Politicians, and the Most Audacious Power Grab in American History*) and get on with honest self-governance such as Elinor Ostrom won a Nobel Prize in documenting, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions). Where the book falls short is in not providing the specifics of where we need to go as a public. I would start with electoral reform in the USA and the UK. As Bob Seelert, CEO of Satchi and Satchi Worldwide out of NYC likes to say, "When things are not going well, until you get the truth out on the table, no matter how ugly, you are not in a position to deal with it." As the most published intelligence reformer in the English language I have spent a quarter century championing ethical evidence-based decision-support over spies and lies, and it was not until Tom Steyer confessed publicly that all his money on climate change was wasted, that I realized that in the absence of honest government no issue is going to get a fair hearing. I would be very pleased if the author's next book completed the trilogy with a practical focus "what is to be done?" For me it is obvious -- an Open Source Agency that in turn funds a World Brain Institute, a School of Future-Oriented Hybrid Governance, and a United Nations Open-Source Decision-Support Information Network (UNODIN). My invited paper for the UN is easily found online (and is here at [http://www.unodin.org/](#)), my article for Spanda on Applied Collective Intelligence is free online, and my keynote to the Ecuadorean intelligence community of November 2014 also. These efforts of my own complement this book by David Korten, and could be a starting point for a practical revolution that integrates CrisisMappers, Buycott.com, Provenance.org, and a few other

bits and pieces to create a hand-held true-cost "app" that buries specific corporations and anything owned by the Koch Brothers, overnight. Holistic analytics, true cost economics, and open source everything engineering are the "naked truth" counterpoint to the "new story" that David Korten has placed before us. I cannot over-state the value of what he has done, it needed doing, needs more doing and it needs sharing. On this foundation, and I am out of links but want to salute Vaclav Havel's Power of the Powerless and Howard Zinn's A Power Government Cannot Suppress, it is possible for We the People to abandon the paradigm that concentrates and celebrates money, and begin again to celebrate the paradigm that values all life and celebrates all life. This book is a triumph and I pray it leads to the resurrection of intelligence with integrity among the sleep-walking public aptly pigeon-holed by Chris Hedges, another of my heroes, in his book, Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle. Best wishes to all, Robert David STEELE

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