Thinking Dialectically Toward Community

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Over the last 60 years I have had the enormous privilege of participating in most of the great humanizing movements of the second half of the last century: labor, civil rights, black power, women’s, Asian American, Environmental Justice, anti-war. Each was a tremendously transformative experience, expanding my understanding of what it means to be an American and a human being, and challenging me to keep deepening my thinking about how to bring about radical social change.

However, I cannot recall any previous period when the issues were so basic, so interconnected and so demanding of everyone living in this country, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, age or national origin.

What is going to motivate us to start caring for our biosphere instead of using our mastery of technology to increase the volume and speed at which we are making our planet uninhabitable for other species and eventually for ourselves?

How are we going to make our livings in an age when Hi-Tech and the export of jobs overseas have brought us to the point where the number of workers needed to produce goods and services is constantly diminishing? Where will we get the imagination, the courage and the determination to reconceptualize the meaning and purpose of Work in a society that is becoming increasingly jobless?

What is going to happen to cities like Detroit that were once the arsenal of democracy? Now that they’ve been abandoned by industry, are we just going to throw them away? Or can we rebuild, redefine and respirit them as models of 21st Century self-reliant, sustainable multicultural communities? Who is going to begin this new story?

How are we going to build a 21st century America in which people of all races and ethnicities live together in harmony, and Euro-Americans in particular embrace their new role as one among many minorities constituting the new multi-ethnic majority?