

Becoming a verb

Why visionary futurist Barbara Marx Hubbard sees December 22, 2012, not as the end of everything but the beginning of “conscious evolution.” BY DIANE DANIEL

BARBARA MARX HUBBARD HAS been expecting for decades. Now she has a due date: December 22, 2012, or, as she calls it, Day One. Birth Day. Birth 2012. It also happens to be her 83rd birthday.

Some people are predicting doomsday on that date, believed to be the end of the Mayan “Long Count” calendar cycle, which will “run out” after 5,126 years. But the longtime visionary sees enlightenment rather than apocalypse. She’s not alone in promoting December 22, 2012, as a springboard to positive change, but her proclamations may be among the boldest. “This is the largest wakeup call that any species has ever had,” Hubbard declares. “Humanity has been moving up to this point of overpopulating, polluting, warring. We know we’re in a crisis where our lives can be destroyed, but we’re also in a place where it can evolve into a more sustainable and peaceful world.”

If it seems that Hubbard is jumping on the 2012 bandwagon, in a way it’s the

reverse. She’s been preaching “conscious evolution” and positive human potential since the late 1960s and concedes that December 22, 2012, is arbitrary. “The planet is now open to the vision I’ve been expressing all along,” she says. “For me, it doesn’t have anything to do with the Mayan calendar. It’s just a good deadline.”

In its most basic form, “conscious evolution” is the act of generating a positive future by being aware of how our individual efforts contribute to the global greater good to become, as Hubbard puts it, “Universal Humans.” To achieve that, Hubbard touts both personal growth and global change. “They’re simultaneous. The more one shifts internally, the more you’re giving to the external. If you’re not connected to your being, the work you do in the outside world won’t have as much quality. The outgrowth of that inner essence is your gift to the world.”

A petite woman with snow-white hair and a girlish smile, Hubbard has been proclaiming the positive most of her adult life.

But she hasn’t had a national platform since 1984, when her Campaign for a Positive Future succeeded in getting her name entered as a Democratic candidate for the U.S. vice-presidential nomination. Her vision of a “Peace Room” instead of a War Room, a message she still spreads, attracted a small but loyal band of supporters, although she drew scant media coverage.

In the past two and a half years, Hubbard’s ideas have found new audiences through films, lectures, books and especially through webinars she’s producing with the Shift Network under the heading “Vision 2012.” Also, Neale Donald Walsch of *Conversations with God* fame showered Hubbard with praise in his 2011 book-length tribute, *The Mother of Invention: The Legacy of Barbara Marx Hubbard and the Future of YOU*. In March, an updated edition of Hubbard’s 2001 book, *Emergence: The Shift from Ego to Essence, 10 Steps to the Universal Human*, came out, while the publisher of her 1998 title, *Conscious Evolution: Awakening the*



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Power of Our Social Potential, is considering a new edition.

"I have a passionate excitement about what's possible in 2012," Hubbard says in a voice resonating with energy. Much of her enthusiasm stems from her collaboration with the Shift Network, a Petaluma, California-based for-profit organization started in 2010 by Stephen Dinan. Its mission is to "empower a global movement of people who are creating an evolutionary shift of consciousness that in turns leads to a more enlightened society."

Hubbard's most visible project is a 12-session course called Agents of Conscious Evolution (ACE). Continuing the birthing analogy, she writes in promotional material that the course, which costs \$497, will teach students to "midwife" the 2012 evolutionary transition "by offering a new worldview, breakthrough innovations and new patterns of social synergy." The syllabus assembles Hubbard's lifelong work. Conscious evolution is explained and explored, with an emphasis on moving from ego to essence, finding a true calling and taking one's message into the world. "We're inviting ACE students to form global teams around the world to engage in Birth Day, the same way people now do for Earth Day," she says.

Hubbard sees social media as the key changemaker. "There are innovations and breakthroughs in every field, in every function, but they're unconnected," she explains. "If we can connect them, they can lead to a new, positive world. If I had one wish, it would be 'Facebook with a Purpose.'" Beyond that, she wants to further her idea of a Peace Room as sophisticated as a War Room. "In our war rooms, we track enemies and how to defeat them. In our Peace Room, we track innovations and creative solutions, and how to connect them, communicate them and mobilize them for action."

How this would be achieved is a process that's still, well, evolving. "This is a vision," Hubbard says. "I don't know exactly how it would be done. Maybe it would be inviting people on the Internet to share that they're working on X, Y and Z in a way that people can see it. We're working on that."

Meanwhile, Hubbard relishes this renewed opportunity to share her visions on

a national and even global stage. Despite once being called "the best informed human now alive regarding futurism" by Buckminster Fuller, Hubbard's years of visionary insights have remained below the surface, making her journey also a lesson in persistence. "I've felt all along that this work was intuitively mine to do, but it has been frustrating to not have a platform," says Hubbard, who is refreshingly forthright about her disappointments.

Hubbard's drive to save the human race from itself was sparked by childhood observations, which she chronicles on her website, evolve.org, and in her 1976 autobiography, *The Hunger of Eve*.

Her father, Louis Marx, made a fortune by creating the first mass-produced toys, which continued to sell well during the Depression. The family first lived in Manhattan, then in Scarsdale, New York, and Hubbard attended exclusive private schools. She acknowledges that her portion of the family fortune has given her "food to eat and a place to live, on a modest scale" without having to hold a job. But the money is not abundant enough to fund her projects, she says.

Her mother's death from breast cancer when Hubbard was a teenager first caused her to question the universe, she wrote in *Eve*. "My desire for personal contact with the forces of life was awakening. I was only 14, but the real hunger for deeper purpose had begun."

Hubbard's quest for knowledge was magnified when the U.S. dropped the atomic bomb on Japan in 1945, leading her to question President Dwight Eisenhower, one of her father's friends, about the purpose of power and how it could be used for good. His lack of an answer pushed her further.

She studied political science at Bryn Mawr College, and it was during that time that she started a journal. She's now on volume 175. "I have two large bookcases filled with them," says Hubbard, who writes her thoughts on the unlined pages of hardcover artist notebooks. "I think I was guided all my life to try to track my process of what was motivating me to discover. This way, I can keep the thread of my journey."

Before graduating from college, she married the artist and philosopher Earl Hubbard and was pregnant with her first child,

Suzanne, who recently has started to spread the message of conscious evolution with her mother. Of marriage, Hubbard writes, "I wanted to be Barbara Marx, not Mrs. Earl Hubbard. But I didn't have the strength to struggle against it." By the time she was in her early 30s, Hubbard had five children and was living in suburban Connecticut.

Several events in the 1960s affected her profoundly, starting in 1962 when astronaut John Glenn orbited Earth in Friendship 7, signifying for Hubbard a leap from "human to humanity, from earthbound to universal." Around the same time, she was introduced to the work of psychology professor Abraham Maslow, and then to the man himself. His notions of self-actualization and chosen vocation resonated with Hubbard, who did not have work she found rewarding, though she says she loved her children and played her part. "I was one of those super moms—until I blew up and became an evolutionary woman," she says with a hearty laugh.

Her "soul-changing" moment was meeting virologist and visionary Jonas Salk. "He recognized in me as right all those qualities that I thought were wrong," she says, such as being interested in the future and wanting to connect with others of like mind. "He freed me to be myself and awakened me to evolutionary consciousness." She calls Salk her one true romantic love, although the feelings were unrequited.

For many years, Earl and Barbara Hubbard were involved in boosting the space program, convinced that it signaled the birth of a new era. They formed the Committee for the Future, a small group of space enthusiasts attracted to the ideals of harmony on Earth and explorations beyond the planet.

After she and Earl divorced in 1970, the work continued with her new partner, John Whiteside, former chief of the Air Force Information Office at Cape Canaveral, with whom she remained until his death from lung cancer in 1981. During the 1970s, they organized 25 interdisciplinary conventions around the country called SYNCONs, for "synergistic convergence," bringing together divergent leaders to problem solve. "We were a tiny band of explorers," Hubbard recalls. "I sold my house to fund this. It was very experimental."

Their home and base of operations moved to a Washington, D.C., mansion loaned to them by Hubbard's sister Patricia, wife of Daniel Ellsberg, who released the Pentagon Papers in 1971. (Today, Patricia works as a life coach and shares many of her sister's spiritual philosophies.)

The SYNCONs took place in wheel-shaped environments, with the structure symbolizing the whole instead of the separate. The wheel was divided into wedges representing basic social functions, such as

life changed after hearing Hubbard speak in 1998. "She was the only individual I had encountered who described the human experience within a universal evolutionary perspective," Gaul says. "Her vision was inclusive of the spiritual and the social. She was connecting all the dots."

When Hubbard isn't traveling, she stays on the go at home. She rises at 5:30 a.m. for her "favorite moments. I get my cup of coffee and I quiet my mind to allow the impulse of evolution to rise up and to unfold

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governance, health, infrastructure and science, as well as growth functions, including the arts and space sciences. The goal was to match needs with resources. That organizational structure, which she has expanded and calls "The Wheel of Co-Creation," is the basis of Hubbard's current teachings.

"Even people from opposing sides found they were getting more of what they wanted through connecting," she says. "If there had been a spiritual Geiger counter, it would have gone off the charts. What we didn't have was ongoing dialogue. With the Internet, it's now possible to keep the dialogue going."

AFTER HER FAILED BID FOR VICE president, Hubbard, who is now single, ended up on the West Coast. She's lived in Santa Barbara for a decade, and for two and a half years in her current home, a modest rental house with a garage that holds 10 tall metal cabinets filled with copies of her speeches and other archives. "I have been very persistent in communicating," she notes.

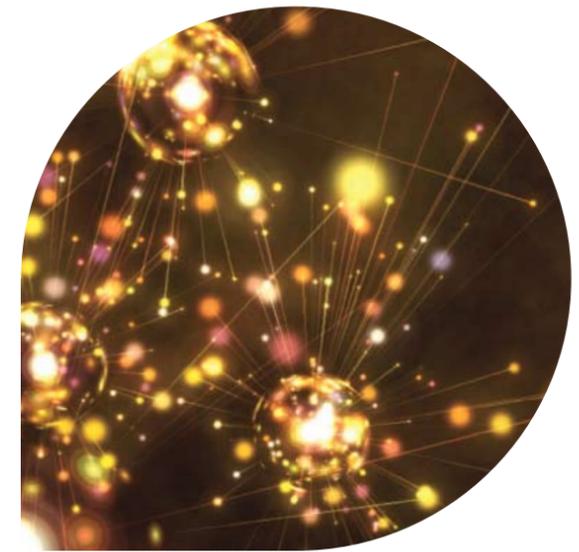
From her house, Hubbard operates the nonprofit Foundation for Conscious Evolution. The executive director is Patricia Gaul, a former actor and Hubbard's assistant and multimedia producer who says her

into my own expression for that day. Then I write in my journal."

She takes daily walks in her neighborhood, usually for 30 minutes. "It's always been my exercise and my relaxation, the way I let my thoughts settle," she says. Hubbard feels the opposite about driving her 2001 Prius, which has traveled only 35,000 miles. "I don't like to drive," she explains. "Usually somebody drives me. I have a real difficulty with a sense of direction on the ground. But ask me for the direction of evolution, that I know," she says with a chuckle.

Everyone comments on the octogenarian's vitality. "What I've discovered is the older I get, the more I can express," Hubbard says. "The world is more interested in what I want to relate, so I've grown more and more energetic." That energy is implicit in what she calls "regenopause," her take on menopause. "Women used to think that when reproduction was done, we were done. But the awakening of the urge to express and create is far stronger than the urge to procreate."

Hubbard's fans are mostly women, many but not all in their regenopausal stage. Olivia Pool, 33, has attended two events featuring Hubbard at the Sophia Institute, a learning center for spiritual growth in

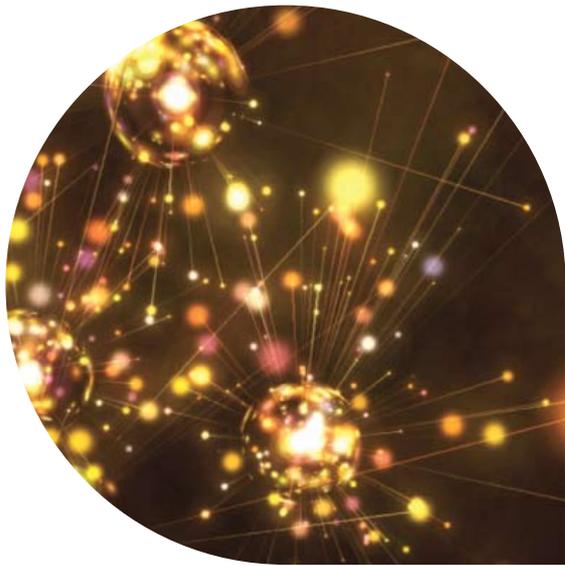


Charleston, South Carolina, which recently added the futurist as a regular presenter. "She comes in this cute little old lady package, but there's this amazing force behind her," says Pool, publisher of *Charleston Art Mag*. "I love her concept of co-creation, working with other people to create things and each person utilizing their best skills to work toward a common goal."

Hubbard frequently espouses a "co-creative society," which she describes as one "in which each person is free to do and be his or her best. It facilitates each person giving his or her gift within the whole, where it fits best."

Carolyn Rivers, Sophia's founder and director, calls Hubbard "a national treasure. I think of her as an evolutionary pioneer. She's saying let's evolve into being who we were destined to be and create a much more conscious world. Her work is really about relationships and a spiritual unfolding and what she calls a compass of joy—our true work aligning with our essence self instead of our ego self."

For Hubbard, the soul-filling work that comes from "a compass of joy" leads to "vocational arousal," which occurs when two or more people feel communal energy around their passions and inspire each other to act collectively. She calls these



on the planet, and that we have a choice: Either evolve or become extinct.”

Van Handel says she initially took the course in pursuit of her own growth, but started to feel inspired to take Hubbard’s message into the community. “I feel more connected to my own heart and soul’s journey, but the other piece is to be part of a community I resonate with. I’m finding more courage to step into universal work. It’s something I’ve been seeking for a very long time.”

help a community or a project and things start happening, then it helps people’s understanding of conscious evolution.”

Hubbard, too, wants to see her “global teams” celebrate “Birth Day” and beyond but says activities are in the planning stage. “We’re going to have as much global media as we can, and, if nothing else, we’ll have a platform for people to connect to each other and share their projects,” she says. Through The Shift Network, she and visionary Byron Belitsos will collaborate on a book

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internal urges “impulses of evolution” and says they guide people to right action.

While Hubbard does some speaking engagements, she’s reaching more people through DVDs and online. An ACE course last summer, for instance, drew about 900 English-speaking students from around the world, mostly Americans. Students are assigned partners and organized into online groups with facilitators. One of the students, Deborah Van Handel, a 56-year-old yoga and Montessori teacher in Litchfield, Connecticut, called Hubbard “riveting. I’m astounded by her. She has the vibrancy of my daughter, and she’s a compelling speaker. I really like her concept that we’re on the edge of evolving as a different creature

Thierry de Wijn, one of a handful of ACE team leaders and the only one outside the U.S., says community work is essential for a global shift. The Dutchman, who lives near Amsterdam, has admired Hubbard since he was introduced to her work in 2003. “I like that she names our global crisis as a birth of something new instead of the end of the world, which really gives you hope,” says De Wijn, 47, who runs the Hubbard-inspired non-profit, the Art of Co-creation, which helps match creative projects with the resources to fund them. One of his goals is to see people in ACE and his own group act to create a better future. “Once we get down to more concrete projects and people see that we

about “parenting the birth,” she says, giving practical ways to realize its potential.

What if Birth Day doesn’t take off? “If this doesn’t work, it’s because something else wants to happen,” she says. “There will be other occasions.”

That devotion keeps Hubbard going. “I’d like to say to all visionaries, ‘Don’t give up. Don’t let frustrations get to you.’ I’m harvesting fields and years of work. ... I feel amazingly joyous. Not a joy out of ‘I’ve succeeded,’ but from the impulse of what I’m being and doing. I’ve turned into a verb. I’m an evolving woman.” ■

DIANE DANIEL is consciously evolving from her home in North Carolina.

Odenow

OdeNow presents **Barbara Marx Hubbard**



This renowned futurist says December 22, 2012, isn’t the end of the world, as some predict, but a springboard to “conscious evolution,” which will enable us to become aware of how our individual and collective efforts contribute to the greater global good and in turn, create a beautiful and innovative future. At this event, Hubbard, author of *The Evolutionary Journey*, will introduce her inspiring vision of how our lives can become tools through which to create that future. Don’t miss this transformative presentation!

Date: April 25, 2012
Time: 3–4:30 p.m. PDT
6–7:30 p.m. EDT

Location: Online
Price: \$10
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