

2019 : Inclusive Activism for a Better and Just World

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Dear Colleagues,

Unlike so many past years, 2018 has been marked by memorable highs and lows.

On a personal note, one of my highlights this year was joining the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) as its Chief Board Relations Officer. This next step in my professional journey allows me to live into my core values of protecting the planet and its people. By working at NRDC, I am part of a team that is taking the lead in responding—by using law, science and advocacy—to environmental challenges, particularly climate change.

The need for climate action is urgent and immediate. From raging wildfires in California to rising sea levels in countries such as Bangladesh, the devastation of climate change is real and has captured media headlines around the world. The recent United Nations Intergovernmental Panel Climate Change report on the rapidity of climate change has served as a deafening global wake-up call. This international report was closely followed by a U.S. government scientific report that underscores the dire warnings of the consequences of climate change.

Extreme weather events, natural disasters, water shortages, and flooding directly imperil the human rights of millions of people and jeopardize their lives, livelihood and health. Fossil fuel extraction, mining, deforestation, heavily polluting industries, and “dirty” water can also lead to a host of human rights violations. As we know all too well, the primary victims of environmental harm are marginalized and impoverished people and communities that have the most limited access to power and resources. All too often, it is women and children who bear the brunt of these human rights violations.

I believe that it is our collective responsibility to strengthen the political will to address these concerns for our planet and its people. I also know that this is not an easy task. Still, I am heartened by new points of light and avenues for change that indicate more inclusive pathways forward.



We are experiencing a golden age of activism, most often led by women, that contains the seeds of significant future social and political change. The results of last month's U.S. election offer hope that fresh leadership can return the nation to a more positive path both in terms of domestic policy as well as its leadership in the world. It is thrilling to see the rising tide of women's power and rights not just in the U.S., but also around the world. There are now more women in public office in nations as diverse as Lebanon, Mexico, Tunisia, Afghanistan, the U.S., and Brazil. In addition, the Me Too Movement has been a cultural watershed in many nations. Women's movements also succeeded in decriminalizing abortion in Chile and Ireland. And finally, this was the year that Saudi Arabia at last lifted its appalling ban on women drivers!

For all these issues and my thoughts on current events, please connect with me on Twitter and LinkedIn, the two platforms on which I will be most active next year.

To... gain insights from what transpired, we must like a three headed Hecate simultaneously look down different paths: one from the past, another of the present, and the one into the future. But then, we have had to do this throughout our account. Can we accurately hear how reverberations from former journeys travel through present times, into a future that is unknown to us, yet shaped by our collective resolve? In trying to bridge what has been folded into the blankets of the sky and the soil we dwell in, we have rotated like a dervish, with one finger pointing toward the azure, and another posting toward the ground. At times, we have whirled beautifully, but at other moments, we have tumbled over our heads. That is perhaps the very best one can say of our journey.

I believe that our collective future lies in our “whirling beautifully” between our aspirations and the hard realities of this imperiled earth and its people. It is in this crucial motion that we rejuvenate our collective resolve to establish a better, more just, world for us all.

With best wishes to all for a peaceful 2019 filled with light and whirling beautifully,

Anika