



Voices
from my
Larger
Community

CHAPTER

11

Voices From My Larger Community

IN EARLY MAY, 2017, when this book was far enough along that I could label it as “Review Copy,” I started sending it off to friends for review, comment and hopefully endorsement. As time went on, I reached out to other authors, friends and colleagues in Japan, and to my wider community of innovators and creators. Every day or two, I would think of someone else and send off another e-mail.

I was bowled over by the response. And I quickly turned it into a problem! How do I choose which to include in the book? It took me weeks to realize that these were not simply endorsements; they were the voices from the community in which I’ve been cooked and baked, eaten and born over the last 17 years. While I have been the one to write this book; its ingredients are the insights, wisdom and experience of hundreds of people with whom I’ve traveled for almost two decades. Their comments offer valuable and important windows into and from *AfterNow*. I decided to include them all to share their perspectives on the insights in this book, which are not mine alone, and to honor this beautiful community with whom I’ve made this journey.

They offer many windows into *AfterNow* from the personal experience from many who have been on this long road, together.

Words from Other Authors

I have deep respect for the wisdom of my author friends, who, like me, have taken the time to distill their experience into books. For us it’s our best way to share our insights and experience. It is our art

form. Meg Wheatley and Mary Catherine Bateson, who wrote the Foreword and Afterword, are also, of course, master artists among this company of friends.



“Bob Stilger has written a brilliant, personal account of how to apply a learning orientation to complex issues of community renewal. His engagement with events in Japan after the Triple Disasters represents a real-world application of working with volatility and uncertainty in groups, social networks, and organizations. *AfterNow* is alive with theory, models, practices, and processes that can enliven any group.”

Alan Briskin, USA, author, *The Stirring of Soul in the Workplace*

“For well over two decades, we have been both witness to Bob Stilger’s work and the beneficiaries of his deep learning. *AfterNow*’s wisdom, stories, principles and practical applications come from Bob’s life-long work all over the world, working with people on the ground and learning together on behalf of the common good. Not only is this a fascinating read for anyone interested in how real change happens, it’s an essential teaching for anyone who aspires to be of service to those seeking to transform their organizations, communities and the larger world.”

Carole and David Schwinn, USA, co-authors, *The Transformative Workplace: Growing People, Purpose, Prosperity and Peace*

“Following the Triple Disasters of 2011 many things floated across the Pacific Ocean to North America. But until now, we have yet to have the impressions and insights of a faithful witness who accompanied, learned from and interpreted the experience of his Japanese friends and colleagues as they lived with the disasters and the subsequent changes in their lives and society. Bob Stilger is a passionate observer of resilience and he has dedicated his life to weaving together the disparate experiences of peoples around the world so that all may benefit from the collective learning of human communities. *AfterNow* is

powerful artifact of his own learning in Japan and offers grounded maps and practices for our times. It is a gift from a troubled present to a hopeful future.”

Chris Corrigan, Canada, author, *The Tao of Holding Space*

“In *AfterNow*, Bob Stilger brings the unique perspective of the Sacred Outsider, someone who offers profound listening and presence. In this book, he offers that listening most directly to the tragedy of Japan’s Triple Disasters, but the thread of his compassionate presence brings the reader into an understanding of the patterns of crisis and resilience that permeate our global culture today. He invites us to consider what else might be possible if, rather than waiting for disaster to strike to remember what matters, we in this moment, now, reclaim our commitment to community and connection.”

Deborah Frieze, USA, author, *Walk Out Walk On: A Learning Journey into Communities Daring to Live the Future Now*

“In this brilliant book, Bob Stilger offers a welcome guide to strengthen our personal and community capacities for resilience and prepare for the inevitable upcoming changes, challenges, and crisis. Bob draws deep insight from his work helping communities around the globe discover the power of their collective wisdom. Offering inspiring examples of the courage, clarity and community that can emerge when people gather to discover and create new potentials when old certainties and assumptions of the past have been shattered and washed away.”

Joel and Michelle Levey, USA, co-authors: *Living in Balance: A Mindful Guide for Thriving in a Complex World*

“Bob and I have been colleagues for decades and I’ve followed the evolution of his thinking and professional practice over many years. His work in supporting community resilience under devastating conditions is a lesson for all of us as we seek to navigate the uncharted territory that awaits so many communities facing unprecedented challenges. We live in a time of tsunamis, tornadoes, financial crises, wars, oil spills, political/institutional breakdowns, and climate change. Many of us around the globe are or will be facing situations that Bob has so ably

helped communities to navigate after the tragedies in Japan. The lessons and principles in *AfterNow* have already been useful with many facing the Japanese disasters. I have confidence that his message and the practical frameworks he offers will find resonance with all of us facing uncertain futures under unknowable conditions.”

Juanita Brown, USA, author, *The World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter*

“If I could only have one book about leading social innovation on my shelf, *AfterNow* would be my choice. To read Bob Stilger’s stories is to sit next to a master practitioner — one who is both humble and generous with his teaching. *AfterNow* provides much more than a set of principles and methods for community-based change. It invites us into a way of being that unleashes hope, imagination and resolve in the face of confusion and despair.”

Larry Dressler, USA, author, *Standing in the Fire: Leading High Heat Meetings with Clarity, Calm and Courage.*

“I was very fortunate to be part of the team that worked with Bob on *AfterNow*. I have greatly appreciated his openness, wisdom, humility, and good humor. Through our work together, I have gained both a friend and valuable insights into how we, by working together in community, can find ways forward even in times of chaos. It gives me hope for our future.”

Megan Scribner, USA, editor, co-author *Teaching with Heart.*

“In Bob Stilger’s beautifully crafted and life-affirming book, *AfterNow*, we hear the echo of the poet John Keat’s line: ‘There is nothing stable in the world; uproar’s your only music.’ We hear this music every time we are surprised by those many aspects of life that are not controlled by us. *AfterNow* guides us towards finding faith that even in the presence of harm; life knows what it is doing. Our encounter with the unknown is not only something to accept, but to be sought after. By following the path through anxiety, grief, and sudden loss of

place, life can be transmuted into something of beauty within which a deeper truth can be found.”

Michael Jones, Canada, pianist and author *The Soul of Place: Re-imagining Leadership Through Nature, Art and Community*.

“Complexity, self-organization, emergence, resilience — Bob Stilger grounds these abstractions in real experiences of upheaval and change, movingly captured in stories of his work following Japan’s Triple Disasters of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear explosions. If you seek the means to navigate through uncertainty with a spirit of community, *AfterNow* offers insights, wisdom, and practices to help you on your path. I recommend the journey.”

Peggy Holman, USA, author, *Engaging Emergence: Turning Upheaval into Opportunity* and co-author, *The Change Handbook*.

“Each now
AfterNow
Asks: “Are we ‘We’ yet?”

AfterNow is triune gift for unleashing powerful we-ness. Bob offers readers:

- a culminating artifact that gathers together social innovation practices he has collaboratively honed over the past 20 years in communities addressing dire circumstances and daring opportunities;
- an invitation to plumb the depths of transferable wisdom for these times made visible by his masterful storytelling about Japanese resilience in meeting their 2011 Triple Disasters of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear explosions; and
- evidence that collaborative attentiveness to restorative beauty works. Bob offers his many gifts wrapped in a bow of courageous compassion.”

Rachel Bagby, USA, author, *Divine Daughter: Liberating the Power and Passion of Women’s Voices, and Daughterhood*.

“Bob Stilger has given us all a tremendous gift of insight, guidance and wisdom. This book is about a way forward that we can each help to build. And at its heart, it is a book about the triumph of the innate human spirit and capacities for placing us on a path of possibility and hope in a troubled time. Read this book and you will cheer.”

Rich Harwood, USA, author, *The Work of Hope: How Individuals & Organizations Can Authentically Do Good.*

“Bob Stilger has written a heartfelt guidebook for our tumultuous times. It’s not easy to think and behave in new ways when facing an unknown future. Working with Fukushima communities following Japan’s Triple Disasters, Bob demonstrates the power of new stories rooted in an ecological worldview, where the healing power of community allows us not only to survive but to thrive. Full of models and tools, *AfterNow* is an artful manual for creating a positive future in this chaotic historical moment.”

Rick Ingrassi USA., co-author, Chop Wood, Carry Water: A Guide to Finding Spiritual Fulfillment in Everyday Life.

“Reading *AfterNow*, I immediately thought of my journey across North America when I wrote *The Revolution Where You Live*. We’ve both been looking at what happens when people stand up and stand together to do what’s needed to make life better. Bob shares the stories of his own journey into Japan’s disasters of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear explosions. He writes about what he heard from people as they found how to step forward. He describes the tools, views and approaches he used and taught to help people create a new normal. It’s a remarkable book, based on years of direct experience witnessing and supporting people who knew they had to make the world they wanted.”

Sarah van Gelder, USA, author, *The Revolution Where You Live*, co-founder of YES! Magazine

“Among the many patterns I see to make participatory culture wiser are the determined use of uncertainty, possibility thinking, spaces for dialogue, the power of listening, feeling heard and collaboration. We can make creative use of diversity and disturbance, partnership

culture, life-enhancing enoughness, the commons, powerful questions, story sharing, working through feelings, generative interactions, and integrity with authenticity. Having worked with Bob Stilger, the compassionately insightful author of *AfterNow*, I am not surprised to see every one of these patterns manifest in the book. Bob highlights them in relationship to our encounters with disaster, and thus in our encounters with each other, to whom we must turn in times of need. In so turning we can begin to discover the wisdom that can come alive among us as we co-create what is next, *AfterNow*, today. Japan is exemplary in *AfterNow*, but we all can recognize our common ground and learn from Bob's important insights and stories."

Tom Atlee, USA, author, *The Tao of Democracy*.

"For me, *AfterNow* is one of the most eagerly anticipated pieces of writing in a decade. The practice that Bob embodies and describes has elegance and grace coupled with steel. I am reminded of why the work matters. Thank you."

Zaid Hassan, UK, author, *The Social Labs Revolution: A New Approach to Solving our Most Complex Challenges*

View from Friends and Colleagues in Japan

While I wrote this edition of *AfterNow* for people outside of Japan, I reached back to my friends and colleagues in Japan to share their impressions of my work over the last seven years. I knew none of them before 2010. Now, we've seen the tears in each other's eyes and we've listened to the laughter of our souls. We have experienced disaster together. We have created hope and possibility together.



"Bob Stilger is a genius who weaves the future from the here and now, when we don't know what is right and are in chaos and confusion. I've worked with Bob for many years in Japan and have been with him when

he senses into the invisible atmosphere — the BA — and then poses the questions the BA needs. He loves Japan deeply and wholeheartedly and is able to be in the BA with a perspective, position, insights, and professionalism. This love and determination is only possible for a person who believes in people and BA. I believe that is what happened in Bob's work in Japan in our time of chaos. *AfterNow* is a hint to shed a light on what's next in the world. I hope the love and wisdom of this book will reach many.”

Ai Sanda, Japan, founder, Co-Creation! Project, researcher,
Jalan Research Center - Recruit Lifestyle Company, LTD.

“*AfterNow* made me feel as if I was experiencing the events and leaning since the Triple Disasters first-hand. It shows how Bob has helped people stay “enspirited” while taking action amid waves of confusion and changes. I'm just so glad that this sad but significant event which took place in Japan can be witnessed through these stories from Bob and everyone around him. Many people around the world, and in Japan, are already forgetting what happened six years ago. We need to learn, not forget. I've known Bob and worked closely with him since 2010 when Bob was introducing Art of Hosting in Japan. First I was just his shadow as an interpreter, but over years Bob has become my teacher, friend, and brother after working together in so many dialogue sessions in Japan, and some in US. *AfterNow* is relevant to everyone who lives in the messy middle — which might just be literally everyone on the planet. We all do live in the time of great turmoil.”

Chie Aikawa, Japan, social-focused
interpreter / diversity facilitator at GiFT

“As the coastal region of northeast Japan was shaken by the earthquakes and was wiped out by the tsunami so was our belief that tomorrow will be just an extension of today. Although what happened that day was extreme in its scope and scale, I think “3.11” is now happening every day in our lives. Unexpected events can happen anytime and things usually don't move according to our plan. In spite of this obvious fact, we still spend so much time and energy in setting goals and laying out plans as if we can control the future. *AfterNow* offers a

different perspective: we need to shift our paradigm in terms of how we create our future. Bob clearly shows that the way we used to create our future no longer works. His point is that we always have to start from the present and also from the people turning to one another. We must let the future emerge rather than manufacturing it. He makes the case through sharing stories of people who worked and are still working tirelessly to create a different future made possible by this historical disaster. The message and the methods contained in this book apply to people everywhere who are trying to create a different future by creating it differently!”

Hide Enomoto, Japan, co-founder of Transition
Japan and Seven Generations

“We still remember when we first visited Tohoku with our friend Bob Stilger a month after the unimaginable tsunami hit. It was the beginning of his journey to create the space for many people — including us — to embrace our pain and focus not on what we lost but what we have within. *AfterNow* has had a significant impact for people in Japan. Bob offers beautiful and precise articulation of what happened in our mind at those moments. These stories remind us of the new possibilities which become present and visible after tragedy. We sincerely hope the English edition will connect our experiences and learnings with further new stories of people around the globe!”

Hideyuki and Yuki Inoue, Japan, co-founders, Inno-lab International Inc.

“In a world of exponential change the importance and power of collective intelligence is like never before in history. Bob shares key insights on how to build communities, react to rapid unexpected change and how to be in your heart when finding your true purpose in life. Seeing Japan’s resilience from an outsider’s perspective also provides useful insights into being civil in a crisis.”

Patrick Newell, Japan, co-founder TEDxTokyo

“*AfterNow* is a great resource of knowledge for those who want to create a better future through personal, organizational and social change processes. Disruptions that make us vulnerable come suddenly. The

vulnerability causes our life and work to derail in troublesome ways, but it also offers a tremendous opportunity to create a future we want. It requires a balance of patience and swiftness, preservation and agile learning. Bob not only offers useful tools and frameworks such as the Two Loops and Arts of Hosting, but more importantly portrays how human beings can bring themselves to the present moments with people in great distress, tensions and needs so that we can co-create futures. His humbleness and compassion, among his other characteristics, provides a role model for facilitators and designers for organizational and social changes. I highly recommend *AfterNow* for navigating our time in all the continents of the globe.

Riichiro Oda, Japan, Japan, general manager, Japan for Sustainability;
chairperson, Society for Organizational Learning Japan Community

“Bob is always illuminating ahead for me. When we had the Triple Disasters in 2011, he told me that the indicators of success in Japan would change soon. Since then, he has been sitting beside us for more than five years, and weaving “new stories” of how we cultivate viable cross-sector communities, re-creating our social systems by ourselves. The Japanese edition of *AfterNow* was truly a valuable reminder and a resource of knowledge for the people of Japan. This edition will help social innovators around the world who develop resilient communities.”

Takahiko Nomura, Japan, Innovation Facilitator,
Founder of Future Sessions Inc.

“Bob Stilger shows us that crisis and confusion are opportunities from which we can make a new future. Grassroots conversations make it so. *AfterNow* invites us to listen to our inner voice — the answers are always within. Dialogue with others helps people find their way forward when they cannot see a future. Bob’s story made a deep impact on readers in Japan. May this edition serve the world.”

Tatsunari Takano, Japan, senior editor, Eiji Press,
publisher of the Japanese edition

Comments from Innovators and Co-Creators Around the World

Since NewStories joined with PeerSpirit and The Berkana Institute to launch a global leadership initiative — *From the Four Directions* — in 2000, I’ve had the opportunity to be with people all over this lovely planet of ours. We’ve met around campfires and in ballrooms as we’ve listened to each other to develop insights and perspective to help guide our work. Together, we’ve created and worked with the many ideas I used in Japan and that I’ve shared in *AfterNow*. This is the lived experience of collective intelligence!



“What I love about *AfterNow* is its provocative invitation to stay in the confusion and “messiness in the middle” long enough that right action may emerge. This book is both extremely timely on a practical level, given the many global crises we face at this time, as well as a great resource for any of us facing difficulties or disruption on a personal level. I found Bob’s wisdom deeply insightful as I struggle on my own journey, beginning with the very first page: “We need to let go of the pretense that we can know what will result from our actions. We need to embrace radical uncertainty, showing up as fully as we can each moment, each breath.” YES! Thank you, Bob Stilger, for your courage, your perseverance and your dedication to sharing the stories of the Triple Disasters in Japan and all of the amazing learning that has come forth from Japan and all around the world since that day the earth trembled back in 2011.”

Aerin Dunford, USA and Mexico, former program
coordinator, The Berkana Institute

“Every once in a while, a book appears at the exact moment that humanity needs it. *AfterNow* is such a book. It shines light on the ways that we, as a civilization, are living in a trance, and how disaster can be our wake-up call. Yet, as Bob notes “Disaster changes everything. And it changes nothing.” How do we take our sacred moments of despair and use them to find our way back to a deeper, more authentic life — as

individuals and as communities? Bob's premise is that everything we need to face disaster is in our present moment. Filled with depth, beauty and the soaring of the human spirit, his stories call us to face forward into the great unknowable future together."

Alicia Korten, USA, CEO, The Culture Company

"The messages in *AfterNow* have relevance far beyond the amazing stories Bob tells of the devastation of the 2011 Triple Disasters in Japan and the responses they sparked in the people affected by them. They are a timely support for all of us who are learning how to navigate the anxious uncertainties of today's world. *AfterNow* reveals a way to move forward together with grace, cultivating curiosity and a profound trust in ourselves and each other."

Amy Lenzo, USA, steward, The World Café Community Foundation

"I have grown up hearing tales of the vibrant, defiant, quixotic individuals and communities that my father has worked with around the world. I have grown up in Japan. I have grown up with the chance to meet and work with those whose stories wend through these pages. This book brings to life the richness and wisdom that I have always found in those voices, that show me that another world is possible, one in which 'moving beyond business as usual' is not just an empty catch phrase. They give me hope. My father is a father figure to many; he has an innate ability to listen and to sit with the things that are most difficult without trying to change them or lighten them prematurely. He can echo back what he has heard in a way that opens new truths and possibilities, in a way that creates grounding where there was none. Early in the book, he says: "We arrive quietly, working from our listening. We hear their stories. In the process, they begin to see themselves in a different light. They are able, literally and figuratively, to remember themselves, to discover more of who they are." This book comes from deep listening. It sheds light on how people and communities in Japan and around the world are living in and rising from disasters. The words in these pages are a powerful reminder of how to embrace disaster and uncertainty — whether ecological, sociopolitical, or personal — as we live our lives in uncertain times. They are also authentic,

a reflection of my father and how he lives his life in all of its messiness and ridiculousness and grief and joy.”

Annie Stilger Virnig, USA, Knowledge Management, Learning, and Capacity Building Specialist, UNDP Global Programme on Nature for Development

“I’m a teacher who wonders, what are we educating ourselves for? Is it to continue on a path many of us do not really want? If we know that we want a different future, where do we begin? To answer these questions, Bob weaves stories and deep wisdom with practical advice. Building on his vast experience and knowledge of change, he brings together many approaches showing that they all have much in common: they begin with being present to what is emerging and then moving collectively to create positive shared stories. I’ve known Bob since my days as a founder of social enterprises in post-war Croatia, where our work was guided by Bob’s wisdom and advice.”

Ante Glavas, USA and Croatia, School of Business, University of Vermont

“In *AfterNow*, Bob Stilger accomplishes something truly remarkable — simultaneously capturing both the unique experiences of Japanese survivors of the 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown while sharing lessons and practical advice that have direct value in our own communities. It is all too easy to dismiss “3/11” as a tragic anomaly, but, as Bob reminds us, acute and chronic disasters are everywhere and growing more likely as we face economic, energy, and environmental crises. Drawing on his humility and practical experience, he provides a roadmap for all of us to begin working towards the after now, today.

Asher Miller, USA, executive director, Post Carbon Institute

“As a member of the team in the creation of this book I had a close-in view. What I noticed through the process was the quality of open exchange in the collaboration, the spirit of encouragement, kindness and leaning in, the willingness to make requests and then hear what was possible and the inclusion of everyone’s opinion in how to proceed. The making of this book was a reflection of its contents - creative, appreciative and loving. “

Barbara Bash, US, artist and author

“Sooner or later we arrive at a stage in our lives where we wonder what happens next. In his book *AfterNow*, Bob Stilger shows us how we can occupy that space with poise, presence and purpose.”

Brian K. Bacon, UK, Executive Chairman, Oxford Leadership Group

“*AfterNow* is a work of brilliance that captures both the unique essence of the Japanese rebuilding efforts and the power of working within community in uncertain times. Part memoir and part manual, Bob’s story of love and commitment grows out of the tragedy of March 11, 2011. I work in and with Japanese contexts, and *AfterNow* speaks to the heart of the rebuilding efforts and the transformational power that rose from the destruction. Read this book and you will not only be filled with hope, but will also take away some practical tools as a contributor to the greater good in the world.”

Britt Yamamoto, USA, executive director & founder | iLEAP

“Bob openly shares his story of resilience based on deep relationships. These stories remind us of how important it is to build relationships and open our hearts and minds to one another. This is where we get our strength to be present to what the world brings to us every day. I have seen this kind of resilience over and over again in my work in communities that have faced disasters. Even now, as coastal Louisiana residents face challenges from climate change, communities find strength and creativity in working together.”

Bobbie Hill, USA, partner — Planning & Engagement,
Concordia, New Orleans

“Bob Stilger has given his life to learning and serving individuals, groups and communities to discover the power of community and connection. *AfterNow* chronicles his journey. Whether read from cover to cover or opened at any page, you will discover gems of wisdom and practical tools to help transform groups, communities and yourself! Bob shows us what it means to shift from problem to possibility and provides tools to open our hearts and minds to seeing strengths within each of us. He reminds us of the importance of seeing whole

systems and what is possible when we come together to co-create a future distinct from the past.”

Charles Holmes, Canada, facilitator, co-founder
Academy for Systems Change

“This book was very difficult for me to read, yet healing. When Cedar Rapids was hit with a surprise raging flood in 2008, destroying 10 square miles in the center of our city, we went through the stupefaction, grieving and conflict common in large disasters. The approaches outlined in *AfterNow* are very helpful for getting a community back to making progress following such a disaster, and have wider application as communities work to develop positive and constructive narratives in our rapidly changing world.”

Chuck Peters, USA, chair of the board, Folience

“*AfterNow* awakens my heart with a vision of how communities of care and collaboration can be created in response to disaster, suffering and grief. It shows how hearts opened in grief and suffering can be healed and how we need and thus can create life-giving relationships that enable us to rebuild individual lives and vital communities in the wake of tragedy. In a polarized era when the leader of our country, the United States of America, frames the world as a competitive jungle, we need hope, we need a vision rooted in reality of how we human beings can find ways to collaborate, celebrate human dignity, and embrace our fundamental interdependence on planet earth. We need a different story: *AfterNow* provides such a story.”

Dean Elias, USA, leadership professor, St. Mary's College of California

“This book is a testament of the true resiliency of the human spirit. I have been working with Bob since the early 2000's as I've learned to untangle many complex issues. *AfterNow* captures the spirit with which we worked to find ways for community to discover the solutions to their complex challenges. Bob is a great listener and harvester of learnings and this comes across very clear in *AfterNow*. It focuses not only on what has been happening in Japan but also what is being noticed in other parts of the world. The book provides a cocktail of ways

and methodologies, as well as approaches, that we could use to solve complex challenges and even emerge from disastrous situations.”

Dorah Marema, South Africa, director. SEED Community

“Bob Stilger combines many years of experience as a leader and teacher with his deep learning and love of community to write *AfterNow*. His work in Japan to facilitate healing, visioning and transformation after the incredible devastation, is an inspiration for so many of us working in these times of tremendous change. Full of insight and practices, *AfterNow* invites us to step into the unknown, knowing we are not alone.”

Gretchen M. Krampf, USA, consultant, Process Experts LLC

“Bob has walked a path many of us find ourselves on: no longer being able to navigate by familiar maps because the territory has changed so radically. Amidst pain, noise, loss, grief, upheaval, disillusionment, how do we find our way, together? With *AfterNow* I feel myself understanding how we might collectively navigate a path forward that is grounded in such deep regard for life, that life itself shows the way. I have underlined half of all of the words written, they resonate so deeply. Appreciating the persistence and patience, deep listening and courage that makes visible this new way to navigate these times.”

Heather Johnson, USA, executive director, Whidbey Institute

“*AfterNow* provides great insights on how we as humans move forward when we face catastrophes, deep tragedy and pain. It is in these times that we must dig deep, ask new questions, realize the true gifts within ourselves, truly connect and build relationships with others, and imagine and create the lives we want. This inspiring book resonates with me as it reflects what I have experienced on a personal level at the worst times in my life. It is often following dark times, that I have been able to truly focus on what is important, grow tremendously, be present and intentional, and springboard into a new light.”

Jessica Eva Jensen, USA, Trail Runner & New Mexico Health Equity Partnership Strategist

“I believe that we can create the world we want together and that the opportunity to create is always in front of us. It becomes more visible and of course more necessary in crisis. I love the way Bob invites the possibility in. When my hometown of High River, Alberta, Canada was flooded and I found myself struggling to rebuild, a dear friend introduced me to Bob. I knew we needed him. He helped us see a version of a new future. *AfterNow* describes the practices that helped us to imagine a new way forward together. We all need Bob’s lessons - I am still practicing with them today.”

Jodi Dawson, Canada, economic development director, High River, Alberta

“What does it take to live with the messiness of a new normal, keeping focused on personal calling, co-creating positive, sustainable shared futures with others?” That was the question I took into reading *AfterNow*. Many concepts in the book are helping me *live with the messiness of my present reality*. One that really stands out is what Bob calls *Enspirited Leadership*. It helps me stop being anxious about “what is the correct thing I must do,” I now find myself looking for time to *stop and be still and chew on my experiences*, while I let my calling find me! *AfterNow* is definitely a must read for anyone who dares to host meaningful conversations among those who will create, not predict, our future.”

Juan A. Kanapi, Jr. Philippines, chairman, Future By Design Pilipinas

“In this noisy world, truth has become hard to hear. And yet, we know. Deep down within us, somewhere, we know. *AfterNow* is an invitation to seek our truths, and a pathway to find them and hear them in others. In a time where we are embattled in noise, *AfterNow* reminds us that listening is power, and in order to truly listen, we must quiet ourselves enough to hear the subtle, small, quiet truths, the truths that offer an escape from this noisy distraction that surrounds us today. Bob illuminates a different way forward, a path that he has been living for many years now. This is our invitation into the years of experience and wisdom that Bob has cultivated with a warm, open, and humble heart. It offers a roadmap of practices, mindsets, and values, that can help us find our way forward in these challenging and beautiful times.”

Kate Seely, USA, NewStories Board Member

“How do we create a life in this time when there is no certain future? Whether we face imminent disaster on the scale of a tsunami or the growing uncertainty shared by many of us on this planet, what we have is each other, right now. *AfterNow* is an immensely rich collection of stories, practices, reflections and resources that is informed by decades of experience around the globe. It responds to this question of what we do now with humility and wisdom. The loud voice of spirit Bob heard as he gathered with people in Tokyo weeks after the disasters — *we have been released from a future we did not want* — offers this release as a real possibility for all of us, now. *AfterNow* invites us to gather around the village hearth to listen together, and then to write a different future.”

Laurie Adams, USA, director and steward of River's Bend Retreat Center

“Whether personal or collective, a sudden disaster rends not just the physicality of place but also the soul fabric of community. Bob’s genius is that he is able to illuminate and activate the invisible warp of a healthy community’s structure — the psychic rules of engagement that foster health and well-being. And at the same time, he names and guides the processes that help a community become the web that weaves those tattered threads across difference and fear into a new, living, soul-connected tapestry that has its own wholeness. He gives us, through both his own participatory journey and the tools he has honed along the way, a guide on how to be with disruptive times. *AfterNow* helps us see how we can heal through dialogue with each other, and how we can bring who and what we are together to co-create a path forward. The future we want to live in will not be imagined by one person, or one idea, or one story, but by a respect for the whole and the gifts of everyone. How we dance with what’s emerging in any of our worlds will make the difference about where we go next as a species.”

Lynnaea Lombard, USA, co-president, NewStories

“A Gift. Bob Stilger has given us a rare gift offered with such tender love and compassion. Called by his heart and friendship, he travelled into chaos and disaster to become a companion to the people of Japan. With his heartfelt listening and companionship he supported an organically

unfolding response to the Triple Disasters. From the intensity of the Japanese cauldron comes a tapestry of rich lessons. In *AfterNow*, Bob brings us several simple but profound maps for how to find our way through monumental rivers of chaos and confusion together. He offers carefully harvested principles for how to co-create and build communities that bring people and connections alive. He shares guidelines gathered from countless stories for how to work with the natural arising flow of emergence in an ever changing and often tumultuous world; working with what we have here and now. His discerning reflections and insights carry important lessons for us all. What he offers here are skills for the future and capacities for Now. As Bob himself says: It's messy. It takes time. And it takes us all, together." I am grateful for the contribution of this book is to our collective journey."

Maaianne Knuth, Zimbabwe, Founder, Kufunda Learning Village

"*AfterNow* is a fantastic book for those who are looking to roll up their sleeves and step into the 'messy middle' of doing real work on the ground. It comes from someone who has dedicated his life to working with communities around the world. I have known Bob Stilger for over 17 years, as a brother, colleague, co-inquirer, fellow troublemaker, warrior of the heart. We share a strong belief in the power of communities and their collective intelligence as the primary vehicle for driving deep social and systemic change. *AfterNow* opens a new channel for intercultural dialogue between the East and West and will resonate deeply with leaders in the Global South. Bob's deep love for Japan, honoring and reconnecting to the wisdom of Japanese culture deeply touches me. I am particularly inspired to see how his work with Enspirited Leadership has evolved and taken shape in Japan. New models of leadership which transcend the dominant logic of cost-benefit rationality, the Market, and techno-utopian fantasies are urgently needed. Bob not only names the challenge leaders face, standing in the messy middle and embracing uncertainty, but also offers many processes and frameworks on how to work from there. True leadership requires that we develop a deeper understanding on how to hold sensitive space for grief, generosity, re-imagination and practical action after a crisis. I walk away from reading *AfterNow* with more practical insights and

tools on how to engage a crisis while the short window of opportunity is open. This book is an important contribution to the global and local conversations on systemic change.”

Manish Jain, India, co-founder, Shikshantar

“The words and meaning of *AfterNow* come from the deep love that Bob Stilger has for the land and people of Japan. It has guided him in writing this book. He not only pays homage to the resilience and strength of the Japanese people who survived the Triple Disasters, he also surfaces from the depths of the despair and the universal lessons we all need to pay attention to. Bob offers us practical wisdom on how to turn disaster into conscious choice to meet new futures. *AfterNow* witnesses, translates and transforms the tragic events in Japan into a worldwide message to wake up before disaster hits and begin to participate in new ways in life. This book is a manual for stepping more fully into life, so that we can make daily choices to live consciously with the earth, our fellow human beings, and all life forms.”

Maria Scordialos, Greece, co-founder of both Axladitsa-Avatakia and the Living Wholeness Institute

“I first met Bob Stilger in 2008. It was his first time to return to his people, the Cherokee. He had not been raised in our Nation or been instructed in the Cherokee core values. But those values are woven into Bob’s DNA. *AfterNow* is a book that gives hope to our uncertain future. It outlines how to organize, move forward and not leave anyone behind. Bob uses the experience of the Triple Disasters in Japan and his work in other communities to illustrate this process. Our Cherokee elders called this GaDuGi, people coming together as one and working to help one another. This is something many of us have forgotten. In *AfterNow*, Bob reminds us how we are to live in this uncertain world.”

Mark Parman, USA, evaluation & outcomes measurement specialist, Cherokee Nation Cultural and Community Outreach

“AfterNow: When We Cannot See the Future. Where Do We Begin — the full title is like a “Koan,” a phase or questions that a Zen master uses to unravel greater truths. Questions quickly arise: What is

“AfterNow?” Where do we begin? What do we see? What is the future? What is Now? The disaster recovery process is messy — there is a sense of not knowing what to do next and a sense of not doing enough. Bob shows how to hold the space in which something appropriate will often happen, as well as how to just accept things as they are. Disaster creates a discontinuity with the past which can allow a new future to emerge. Particularly in this VUCA (Vulnerable, Uncertain, Chaotic and Ambiguous) world, this book provides stories to inspire with multiple structures to guide the efforts to create a new future.”

Mark Pixley, China, general manager, LEADERSHIP INC, Shenzhen

“I was at my desk at the U.S. Army post at Camp Zama, Japan at 2:46 PM on March 11, 2011 when life as we knew it changed for Japan. 250 miles from the epicenter, we experienced the forceful crescendo of rolling and swaying motion unlike anything we had experienced before, lasting an incredible 5 ½ minutes. With horror and helplessness, we began to see the images of the tsunami on Japanese television as it rolled relentlessly over homes, farms, cities. Days later, we began to appreciate the devastation at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant and the true extent of the tragedy. Bob Stilger’s beautiful and insightful book, *AfterNow*, examines the Triple Disasters and other seismic shifts that happen after all types of tragedies and disasters. Leaning into hardship is anathema to many people, but it is in welcoming whatever change is at our door and opening up to community that we make sense of our new lives, no matter how painful. Bob shines a beacon through the darkness to help lead us to new growth and resilience. It is a deeply personal and enlightening book that embraces change in all its forms.”

Michael Brumage, USA, executive director/health officer - Kanawha-Charleston Health Department. Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired),

“This is a time that I often feel like my feet are firmly planted in midair! I go from confusion to fear to uncertainty often in minutes on many days. How do we survive and even thrive in this time? *AfterNow* offers Bob Stilger’s lived experience, interwoven with many other stories of ordinary and extraordinary people of courage and heart. *AfterNow* gives a glimpse of emerging truth. I have spent my life in community organizing and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). I often

feel that many books are not practical to the hard, daily work that must be done on the ground. I appreciate that *AfterNow* is very practical, offering ordinary people like myself a path to action amid all the confusion and uncertainty. It will build a growing community of courageous leadership.”

Mike Green, USA, faculty, ABCD Institute

“In this time of seemingly overwhelming social, political and environmental challenges, Bob Stilger is a wise and compassionate guide to the possible and practical. *AfterNow* uses very personal stories and inspired examples from Bob’s many years of work around the globe in helping communities facing challenges to envision and develop new futures. It is especially enriched by his recent deep and thoughtful involvement with Japanese communities in the wake of the disasters coming from the Fukushima nuclear reactor meltdown. This book, full of practical steps and ideas, will be a good friend to anyone committed to realizing our best possible futures together.

Michael Chender, Canada, co-founder, Shambhala
Authentic Leadership in Action Institute

“*AfterNow* affirms the truth that all we really have to do is be present to one another.

There are no agents of change but meaningful presence to one another, true accompaniment, allows for change to emerge and develop. Listening with our heart, our mind, our will is key. No judgment, no cynicism, no fear. We must stay together, because transforming out of the complexities of today can no longer be addressed alone, especially how we move forward as the future disappears. This disappearance is real every day to Filipinos — indigenous peoples, urban poor, rural farming households — most of those in the periphery have lost their ability to dream of a future. It is in this time of chaos, all over the world, that hope and dreams are most important. Indeed, we must remember that we come alive in community.”

Miren C. Sanchez, The Philippines, co-founder,
president & CEO, Future By Design Pilipinas

“*AfterNow* offers compelling road maps to find ways to counter the side effects that arise after the disaster. Keep the focus on people and allow them the space to find their way through dialogue and emergence. Action must remain grounded in the local which, when connected, leads to transformation. These lessons from Japan apply to India as well. *AfterNow*’s question ‘what do we have’ instead of ‘what have we lost’ is profound, it connects to hope and generates the energy needed to take the necessary steps forward. Bob’s spotlight on his own learning, allowing his own anxieties and insecurities to discover new directions is fascinating. His is a quest to become a sacred outsider with listening and openness as the basic element to know the unknown.”

Nitin Paranjape, India, co-founder, Abhivyakti Media for Development

“*AfterNow* resonates with me, lifts my spirits, and provides me a knowing that there is hope. I am sometimes not a fan of hope because it seems so often to me to be unwarranted and a distraction away from clarity, truth, stepping up and stepping in. Hope is warranted because of the work we do. It’s no wonder that it is Bob Stilger who has blended teaching with story. His story is a long journey in place and over time, with all the whispering insights arising from small moments. It draws the deep movements and unseen power of community out enough that we can see them, if we pay attention. I am as thankful for the journal entries as I am for the clear teaching. They each make visible the invisible journey of an attentive wanderer, offering true insight. *AfterNow* is truly a pathfinder’s guide toward the future. Best read, before disaster.”

Peter Pula, Canada, founder and CEO, Axiom News

“Lynnaea and I joined others on a the 2014 New Stories Japan Learning Journey. I frankly did not know much about Japan or the devastation they had endured. Three years after the disasters, we were welcomed by group after group of community members whose lives had been torn apart in seconds, many of whom had been forced to relocate, unable to return to their homes. I was most impressed by the welcome we received. Bob was honored as a person who had come and listened and held these communities in their grief. I was touched by his gentleness as he approached these communities with an attitude of listening, respect, and caring which clearly had a profound impact of healing. I felt

healed, being present with these new friends. It is beautiful to see these stories come alive in *AfterNow*.”

Rick Paine, USA, board chair, NewStories

“Bob Stilger is a researcher on how we are going to reach the best future we can dream. One thing he knows for sure, the way to get there is by consciously building it together. AfterNow shares his experiences in Japan after the Triple Disasters of 2011, during six years of witnessing the present, researching what is possible now and sowing seeds for the future. Bob shares the best tools, processes and experiences he has harvested throughout his life of interaction with innovative and creative projects and people around the globe. Here you will find moving stories, highly relevant knowledge, and deep wisdom that flows from a professional and a person full of generosity and love for the people and for the planet. Welcome to AfterNow!

Rodrigo Rubido Alonso, Brazil, co-founder and
executive director of Instituto Elos

“Bob has been my mentor since we met in Zimbabwe in late 2011, just after the triple disasters had happened. He’s a unique combination of deep wisdom and youthful curiosity, that’s a joy to be around. Since we met there have been many moments in my life where his questions and insights helped me move through my own personal disasters. *Afternow* is the condensed wisdom from a true servant of life. Deep bob of gratitude for to you Bob for giving birth to this incredible gift.”

Simone Poutnik, USA and Germany, member, NewStories Board

“Bob and I first met as 21-year-olds, traveling to Japan to spend our senior year in college at Waseda University in Tokyo. While I had a long-standing interest in Japan, Bob told me that he knew nothing about Japan, only that “it was over there someplace near China.” What surprised and impressed me was that Bob soon became a serious and sincere student of Japanese language and culture. A second characteristic that drew me to Bob was his very unusual ability to listen deeply, without interrupting, without judging. Over the years, as we co-founded a

nonprofit, got married, had our daughter Annie, and grew older, Bob developed a capacity to sit calmly, or at least relatively calmly, with uncertainty and murkiness. These three gifts — a great love of Japan, the skill to listen deeply, and the ability to live with and learn from uncertainty — anchored Bob's work in Japan and shine through the pages of this book. Having been involved in part of the work in Japan, as well as in both the Japanese and English versions of this book, I can attest to Bob's determination to tell these stories and share these tools, and to invite all of us into the stories of our own lives and the life of our communities. *AfterNow* is both a good read, full of intriguing and inspiring stories, and a toolbox for work in our world. It is a story of Bob's journey and at the same time a universal story of walking into the unknown. *AfterNow* offers us a compendium of tools plus the context in which these tools were effectively used. Page through it, dip into it, or read it cover to cover — you will be enriched by what you find."

Susan Virnig, USA, partner in life and work, spouse, best friend

"Bob's words transport us on a journey of exploration of what is meaningful action in times of transition. With Japan setting the context both literally and culturally, this book honors the human endeavour to save itself in times of upheaval - a lesson we need to learn the world over if we are to be ready for more turbulence and be able to face it with dignity and compassion. This is essential reading for social innovators ready to accelerate their learning trans-locally, with an understanding of how challenge can give rise to communities of action."

Tatiana Glad, The Netherlands, Social Entrepreneur, Impact Hub Amsterdam

"Bob Stilger saw something in me when I was young man that I could not see in myself. His ability to see clearly into the heart of people and situations is reflected in this profound and practical book. Bob has harvested years of experience in leading change and the incredible relationships he has built along the way. Read *AfterNow*. You'll be better for meeting Bob; I know I am."

Tim Merry, Canada, Change leader

“I’ve known Bob for 20 years. He’s has a big heart, deep thoughtfulness, and knows how to get things done. Bob inspires me with his insightfulness in naming key principles, and then having the wisdom to ask and discover the right questions. In *AfterNow* you will find principles and questions that awaken you to Japan’s resilience story. Perhaps also, you will find your own beginnings of where, how, and after now.”

Tenneson Woolf, USA and Canada, board chair, The Circle Way, steward, The Art of Hosting

Bob Stilger has been instrumental in growing a global community of practice dedicated to learning how to create the future we want to live, together. His soulful work in Japan has helped us all look at disaster and change differently — learning how to lean in together regardless of the difficulty or complexity. In *AfterNow* we meet people and communities right where they are at, in the space between the honest, and often different, realities and in the dreams and wisdom of the community. The path forward emerges at our feet. Thank you Bob, for faithfully walking this path everyday and sharing the stories and powerful insights from life after the Triple Disasters. I hope we can all take to heart what it means to navigate radical change TOGETHER with grace.

Teresa Posakony, USA, Art of Hosting Steward

“*AfterNow* is a beautiful, heartbreaking, inspiring and important. This is a book with many people’s stories including Bob Stilger’s own - of how he asks burning questions, how he sees, how he shows up, how he serves the Japan he loves and has learned with and from most of his life. Seeing the past and the future from the Now is a wise perspective. *AfterNow* is a most helpful offering — a statement that there is not just one official way, one solution to complex disasters. There are many perspectives, practices, methods, wiser ways forward. This book is a profound, honest and heartfelt harvest of one unwanted disaster. There are many in our world today and I am so very grateful there are humans like Bob, who takes the time to harvest as he walks his own learning path and then shares it in service of the rest of us citizens of Earth now. This book is not just a book - this is a gift from the heart.”

Toke Moeller, Denmark, co-founder, Art of Hosting Community

“Bob Stilger has been at the forefront of cutting-edge work in communities for several decades. He has worked creatively and courageously with very diverse groups around the world, hosting spaces in which people discover and embrace their power to create new ways of being. He has also helped launch and guide several practitioner networks that support our collective learning about collaborative leadership. In this context, I’ve always valued Bob’s gift for reflecting on his work and highlighting the lessons it might offer for others. That’s the promise of this book — to serve as inspiration and resource for the countless people in every field, and every society, grappling daily to co-create healthy, sustainable futures.”

Tom Hurley, USA, faculty, Oxford Leadership Academy

“As always, Bob tells the stories that bring life to the values and principles so many of us aspire to in our practice. *AfterNow* is a generous and beautiful book that elegantly guides the practitioner through the chaos and overwhelm of disaster, offering sage advice and practical tools for being of service.”

Valmae Rose, Australia, founder, Future By Design

“On the day before the final layout is due, sitting here reading all the other endorsements, I get yet another email from Bob asking me to write one myself. He says since my name begins with Z it will be the very last, and since I know the person doing the layout, he’s sure it can be fit in. That’s Bob. I have been part of the team who worked to make it possible for you to hold *AfterNow* in your hands today, I helped doing graphics, illustrations and coordinating the layout of the book. I was invited to be part of bringing visual beauty and clarity through design with the intention of supporting the meticulous weaving of stories. And this is how I get to read these voices from the larger community, before many other people. A mix of feelings engulf me. I have met some of these people, and read the books of the authors. I have quoted them in conversations, I follow with admiration many of their endeavors and recognize in them the authority to “have something to say.” What have I got to say?

And then I understand what Bob is doing. Once again, he is bringing us into circle and hosting us, listening to us, meeting us with

respect, curiosity and generosity, making visible our collective hopes and aspirations for a future we want to be part of creating. I can't help but smile and let the feeling of anxiety go. The anxiety of writing this comment and also for the huge uncertainties about the future: the future of Colombia, the country where I was born which is currently going through a long waited for peace process; the future of my parents going through very tough health and relationship challenges; the future of our pacha mama with the environmental and social challenges we are all facing. I hold my daughter's hands in mine and I accept wholeheartedly Bob's invitation to continue nurturing life-affirming relationships with myself, my family, my community and nature. Gracias Bob."

Zulma Sofia Patarroyo, Colombia, listener and graphic facilitator