

Creating Change Together: An Initiative for HR1973

“If you could choose one thing to do to save the world, what would it be?”

Roger Myerson, '73

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

Introduction

The concept for **Creating Change Together** is simple: create a vehicle to bring interested classmates together to help address important local, national, and international problems. Over the past three months, over forty classmates have contributed initial ideas for accomplishing this goal.

It is clear that individually, many classmates have been doing tremendous good in the world and have the capacity to do more. Creating a vehicle that will facilitate collaboration and align our strengths can create positive changes far greater than if we act separately.

Within our class, individually and collectively, we have accomplished much. We have experience and exceptional expertise; we have notable financial capacity; and we have considerable influence. We are also entering a phase of life when many will have more time available to apply these assets to meaningful work. Even more significantly, many classmates still have a compelling desire to accomplish more than they have been able to do so far and they are inspired to think that Classmates from HR1973 can do this together.

Motivations

As we have talked with representative classmates, many have expressed their motivations for working together. Here is a sample:

- A yearning to make a difference, to create positive change
- Concern about social injustices that have not been adequately addressed in our lifetimes
- Concern about the environment
- A desire to find creative, engaged and meaningful purpose in our later years
- A wish to use personal expertise and intellectual abilities in collaboration with other classmates
- A desire to give back
- A wish to be part of something big, bold, innovative and creatively different
- The desire to create a legacy for our children that has social responsibility at its core
- The knowledge that if we do this well, we could become a model for other Harvard classes and possibly impact the policies of the University by our work and example
- An opportunity to create public discourse on what it means to be a good citizen
- A desire to fix the world's underlying inequities
- A desire for “lifelong learning “ and excitement about returning to learning with classmates
- And yes, even a lingering, innate desire to “save the world”

How are we going to get this done?

There are a few core strategies emerging:

- Finding ideas/current initiatives that need a boost of energy/expertise/resources to increase momentum (change acceleration)
- Finding ideas/issues at critical junctures or tipping points and influencing positive resolution (change influence)
- Identifying important problems where intervention strategies have been less than fully effective and forging new paths (change innovation)

There are a few suggested pathways to getting there:

- Development of a clearing house and tracking system for projects/initiatives that are already being pursued by classmates and a “matchmaking” service to link their needs with expertise that other classmates can offer
 - This may be as simple as telephone consultations or other off-site assistance, but could also include one or more classmates going on-site, to help with various local, national, or international initiatives.
 - Development of an initial web-based infrastructure could be a relatively straightforward goal and implemented expeditiously.
- Project identification, strategy development, and implementation for *a few* major concept-building initiatives, where the interests of groups of classmates would be focused on specific, well-defined targets
 - This would most likely start with two to three topical work groups to be defined based on broad interest.
 - Discussions to date indicate notable sentiment that the *initial* topical work groups should focus on issues in the US, even though there is great potential to address issues of international importance. Nonetheless, this does not preclude consideration of any suggested topics.
- Development of organizational and operational infrastructure
 - This will need to include managerial capacity and financial support as well as logistical support, such as with the use of various networking technologies.
 - It will include creation of guidelines for project selection and implementation, as well as approaches for communicating with classmates, promoting shared education, and documenting the impacts of our success.

Change Topics—Emerging Broad Categories

In conversations with classmates, a large number of areas of interest and ideas for projects have emerged. What follows are representative examples drawn from a much larger (and growing) master list. It is highly likely that many current initiatives of individual classmates fall in these categories. ***Focusing any of these general ideas into specific and doable projects will take considerable insight, collaborative work, and the expertise of those who decide to join any topical work group.***

Several broad topics for further consideration include:

- Issues related to aging
- Veteran’s issues
- Population control
- Health care cost, quality, and access
- Climate change
- National and international clean water shortages
- Music, art and theater as change vehicles
- Poverty and economic development strategies
- The continuing issue of Race in America
- Improving US schools
- Campaign finance reform
- Voter rights
- Issues of increasing urbanization
- Legal system reform
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Aligning the resources, interests, passions, time, values, and philosophies of our diverse class is a significant challenge. It is complex, but it need not be daunting. There is substantial work to be done by those who embrace this bold concept. We look forward to discussions of these ideas at the reunion, and we welcome your creative input and involvement in shaping and implementing **Creating Change Together**.

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Creating Change Together: An Initiative for HR1973 Reunion Events and Description

There are three Reunion events associated with this initiative. A short paper describing *Creating Change Together* follows the list of reunion events.

Friday, September 27, 10:20-11:40am

Science Center, Lecture Hall D

Symposium: *The Dynamics of Change.*

Short Ted-style talks by classmates whose work has created positive change here and around the globe.

Panelists:

Ellen Calmus, Project Coordinator, The Corner Project, Malinalco, Mexico

Vivian Lewis, Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity, University of Rochester, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology

Jono Quick, President & CEO, Management Sciences for Health

Eric Smith, Chairman and CEO, Consulting Services Support Corporation

Jonathan Sprague, President, Rocky Coast Consulting

Steve Wessler, Consultant: Human Rights Advocacy, Education and Training

Marion Dry, moderator

Friday, September 27, 11:30am-1pm

Lunchtime discussion/planning session for *Creating Change Together.*

Tichnor Commons, Bolyston Hall (please pick up box lunch in the Reunion Tent before heading to Boylston Hall)

Saturday, September 28, noon to 1:30pm

Second Lunchtime discussion/planning session for *Creating Change Together* (location TBD)