

Experience deep change to get to the core of what you're capable of

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Holland, MI — The best book on leadership I know is “Change the World” by University of Michigan professor Robert Quinn.

Quinn advocates “advanced change theory.” Advanced change theory is based on the assumption that humans need to find meaning, practice integrity and make a significant difference. But most humans don’t find meaning or wholeness because they fear “deep change.” Instead, they live lives of self-deception and dissociate from people they can’t change instead of looking at their own hypocrisies. By resisting deep change they choose to be controlled by what others think of them and live lives of “slow death.”

Therefore, in general, the world doesn’t change. It remains stuck in a “frozen bureaucracy” of routine, predictable, self-centered and meaningless behavior.

“Change the World” characterizes leadership as “Go forth and die.” Its leadership theory is modeled after extraordinary people such as Christ, Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., yet it is a book about how ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary results — not because results are the focus of leadership, but because commitment is.

We each need to experience deep change to get to the core of what we are capable of and produce productive communities. When we model our new attitude — some would say only by the grace of God — we “break” the system around us, and others begin to change their behavior as well. But it’s a constant battle with our selves.

Some people are modeling this behavior for us. They call themselves Hope for Kids Mexico. In Miguel Aleman, a small city just across the border from Roma, Texas, are two pastors who have a common commitment to bring hope to the children and families of their city through education. David Martinez and Ramon Solis are fighting against the frozen bureaucracy of meaningless behavior centered on drug trafficking, physical abuse and poverty. To create a productive community, they are creating a school to help students learn how to become inner-driven and others-focused.

The pastors and members of their church have been praying for more than 20 years for the children of their city. Now their prayers are being answered. Hope for Kids Mexico, a group of people in West Michigan, is creating a productive community that is changing the lives of others through education. The group’s goal is to change the community of Miguel Aleman “one life at a time, resulting in generations of excellence.” The group’s strategy is to partner with community members in Mexico to grow indigenous leaders by creating a better “soil” for learning. Eagle College Elementary School now has a population of more than 125 students in a facility designed for 50.

Ron and Jane Brouwer are two members of this group in West Michigan. Ron started on his journey of change almost five years ago. He visited three towns in Mexico with two West Michigan pastors and talked with church leaders in Mexico to gain a better understand of their goals and needs. They selected the Miguel Aleman project. In January 2009, Ron hopes to take a one-year leave of absence from Pine Creek Construction Company to help build a new school building.

Bob Ebels, the men’s golf coach at Hope College, is developing a fundraising plan to buy land and build the school. He is also encouraging work groups and skilled laborers to partner with the local people in Mexico. Hope for Kids Mexico is also recruiting teachers.

You too could experience advanced change theory. It might begin with a visit to www.hopeforkidsmexico.com.