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## A Chance to Change Mindsets

Forum contribution: [After the Pandemic: Which Future?](#)

Mamphela Ramphele

One of the most enduring gifts from the COVID-19 situation is the opening of our eyes to our capacity for behavioral change. The response to the pandemic has triggered a real-life experiment that demonstrated that achieving zero-emissions is possible and, more broadly, that regenerative feedback loops can kick in rapidly. Venice, with its canals now teeming with fish and ringing with melodious birdsong, is the most dramatic example that great transitions are possible and achievable.

The challenge we face is to translate behavioral change prompted by the duress of an existential crisis into a persistent mindset change. Then, we can emerge from this multi-layered emergency with higher consciousness of the urgency to shift gears for accelerating a transition to a global development system that promotes the well-being of all people and of our planet.

We have no rational choice other than to seize the moment this crisis offers us to engage in conversations across boundaries of nationality, class, generation, and ideology. The aim must be to initiate and support the radical shifts in development approaches by governments and international organizations that are essential for shaping a [Great Transition](#). Global citizens dare not leave it to leaders who are not yet seeing the writing on the wall, but should use the power of intergenerational coalitions to persuade and demand radical change.

Mindset change requires awakening in all of us the essence of what it means to be human—a deep yearning for interconnectedness and interdependence. We are all creatures in a shared ecological system who can only function well through reciprocity and learning from the regenerative intelligence of nature. Young people across the globe understand and yearn for

these values. They should be infused in our education and training systems, as well as in our social relationships.

We need to reclaim and reframe economics and rethink finance as a tool of exchange of real value, rather than the addictive instrument of insatiable consumption and wealth accumulation that it has become. Higher education and training institutions should transform their curricula to reflect the emerging values of well-being economics and greater emphasis on environmental humanities. Human life is invaluable, and its best guarantor is development approaches that value the well-being of all people and of the planet, rather than chase the mirage of infinite economic growth.

The pandemic has demonstrated in stark and cruel terms the cost of disrespect for human rights and dignity, inequalities within and between nations, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. Leaders such as the US and Brazilian presidents, whose incapacity to engage this new reality has been laid bare, are a danger to the very survival of the human race. They need to be vigorously challenged by their citizens and the global community as a whole.

There are promising examples of countries that are building the Great Transition future we want to inhabit. New Zealand, Iceland, and Scotland, for instance, have already adopted well-being economic development approaches—and are, reaping the benefits. It is not a coincidence that many of them are led by progressive women who are demonstrating the power of the feminine to operate within a values framework that emphasizes interconnectedness, interdependence, reciprocity, and intergenerational responsibilities and complementarities. The Great Transition to a world of well-being for people and planet is possible and in the process of being elaborated.

This is the time for collaboration across boundaries and to build a more resilient global system for the sake of our grandchildren and our planet.

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## About the Author



Mamphela Ramphele is the co-founder of ReimagineSA and Co-President of the Club of Rome. She has received numerous national and international awards acknowledging her scholarship and role in leading projects for marginalized people in South Africa and elsewhere. Earlier in her career, she was a founder of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, a Vice-Chancellor at the University of Cape Town, and a Managing Director at the World Bank. She has written numerous books and articles on South African politics, including the recent *Dreams, Betrayal, and Hope*.

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## About the Publication

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