

INTRODUCTION

Berlin, November 1989. Power fell and people rose.

It was a *moment*. It was a *movement*.

At some point in the life of every generation there are these *moments*, these *movements*.

We are taught that they define and influence our mindset, that they are part of our cultural and collective DNA and that they meld our history into the malleable truth we feed our children.

And they do.

But they are only a tiny fraction of the picture.

For in your world, *moments* such as these are occurring every day, initiated by ordinary people who have no inherent ambition to be part of history, but who exercise their humanity in the hope of leaving the world a slightly better place than they found it.

Every day, millions of people around the world do things that don't make the headlines and won't fill tomorrow's history books, and yet these same things may have profound influence on the way you live your life. Every day, ordinary people do extraordinary things that demonstrate courage, tenacity, unselfishness, vision, spontaneity and love.

Who are these people? Look around you. They are right there; on the subway, pushing a cart around the grocery store, walking along the sidewalk, picking up their children from your school. They are you. They are us. *We* are the people of whom we speak.

We – us – *people*. Empowered by technology and the unseen forces of globalization. Empowered by the diminishing role of government. Empowered by a collective

consciousness that is calling out for change, and by a media that has force-fed us the cult of the individual until we have all bought into it. *We* are making change in unprecedented ways.

All around us, those who traditionally had the power, are floundering. Politicians, despite their desperate posturing, are impotent to master the global economic machine. Economists are trying to predict tomorrow's markets with theories that were written on parchment paper and charities are still making the same empty promises that we've been hearing for thirty years.

The institutions cannot be relied upon to create the solutions we need. The powerful no longer have the power. And we all know this.

So. What are you going to do about it?

This book is about addressing that question. It is about showing how you can take your power, about helping and challenging you to be part of the solution in ways that you have dreamed of but not yet realized. About giving you the tools you need to be the change you want to see in the world.

To do this, we should start by taking inspiration from iconic leaders of the last century. Some faces come easily to mind: Mandela, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Ang San Suu Kyi, the Dalai Lama, Che Guevara, Desmond Tutu. Others are more difficult to conjure up, even though the names might be familiar: Vaclav Havel, Lech Walesa, Andrei Sakharov, Wei Jingsheng, Mohamed Bouazizi.

How are these people like you? Or more, how are you like them?

At first glance, you might not feel any particular commonality with an iconic leader. You might feel humbled by Mandela, rather than thinking of him as a peer. And as you go through the list – from armed revolutionaries to religious leaders, from trade unionists to physicists, you would be forgiven for seeing them in a different category. Away from mere mortals such as *us*.

But, what if these people had a commonality between them? Not in who they are but in what they have experienced?

What if there was something in their respective journeys that was the same, or similar, regardless of who they are and where they started?

What if there was, in some way, a common path that these leaders (consciously or unconsciously) followed?

And, *what if* we could all learn and gain insight from those experiences?

What if you, could be just like them, by being just like you?

(me)volution

We believe that there *is* a common journey that guides our iconic leaders and heroes. We believe that *they share a similar set of experiences and they have travelled a similar path*, much of it routed in philanthropy, the love of humankind.

We further believe that these experiences are not limited to the Gandhis and the Mandelas of this world. We believe that ordinary people are having them every day. And we believe that you can have them too.

These unrecognized heroes have much to teach all of us – and in recognizing their journey, we can find out where *we* are on *our* journey and find the inspiration to not rely on politicians and economists and third parties to create the world we want to leave to our children.

We are going to share the stories of eight people. Not eight iconic heroes who figure in history books, nor eight Nobel Prize nominees. These are stories of eight regular people who have each changed the world in a powerful way. Ordinary people who have made a big difference. Their stories illustrate, similar to those of a Mandela or a Luther King, a shared set of experiences that propelled them through their journey of philanthropic

change – driven by a love of humankind and a desire to do something to make life better for someone or something.

This book is about them. And it is about what we can learn from them.

They are (me)volution. They've been through it. And collectively they'll show you the path.

But it is also about you, and your own personal journey.

As you explore the pages ahead and discover (me)volution for yourself, we think you will find both affirmation and encouragement. We hope that you will be able to recognize yourself through the experiences of others and that they will give you confidence to follow your dream, to articulate your vision for a better world and to go out there and make a difference.

We would love to think that we invented (me)volution. And in a way, we did. But really, it was gifted to us. We did no more than listen and learn from the stories of these eight people. And that in itself, may well be the biggest lesson we can all draw upon.

If you are already on the road to change, use this book to strive ahead, safe in the knowledge that others (and not just the people you read about in the history books) have been there before you. If you are just beginning, you now have a guide to take with you. May it bring you strength.

So what exactly is (me)volution?

Well, it begins with a *feeling*. A visceral experience. A sensation that wells up inside and forms itself into an idea that just takes over. Like a saucepan of milk boiling over on a stove. Seizing the heart, the mind, the nervous system. Becoming a conviction, a passion, a compulsion.

It is a feeling that “I need to do this” regardless of what “this” is.

We've all had these moments. You know what we are talking about. Maybe you saw a photo, a film, a documentary or a report. Maybe you heard or read something. It's often a reaction to the status quo or to an injustice. It may involve righting a wrong, correcting an injustice, protecting the environment, helping the hungry, healing the sick, saving a life or creating a vision for a better future for a single person, or a whole community. Or none of the above. But it's grabbed you. And you know you need to do something about it. And you know that you can be part of change.

And then it morphs.

It moves from a very personal feeling to something that you share. And when you do – when you share your outrage, your dream and your vision, you create the platform where you can bring people together. People who get it. People who resonate with the values you are sharing, who want to help you and be a part of whatever it is that you are doing.

And then, as a critical mass of people, energy and change builds, you empower others. You provide the tools for the message to spread, for the movement to build and for transformation to become possible.

This is the journey that cuts the pathway to every real change:

- A sensation that becomes an idea.
- An idea that gets powerfully shared.
- A movement that is empowered.

(me)volution has three parts to it:

I) The journey you take in yourself

The sensation takes form. It wells up inside you and begins to take shape – a desire to help, to do something, to take action, to change the status quo. You think about it, you form it, you move from initial visceral compulsion through a growing sense of conviction and confidence as whatever “it” is begins to become real.

II) The transition from you to others

You make it real – by doing something, taking that first small step towards changing the status quo. And by doing so, you make it real for others, who can join, who can embrace your vision and the values you are sharing and get involved too.

III) The journey others take with you

The idea grows into a mission or a cause that becomes bigger than you, that becomes about “us” rather than about “me.” For no-one who has ever brought about change in the world has done it alone. They have done it by empowering and inspiring others.

(me)volution is about going from an individual passion to “do something”, through the articulation and sharing of the idea, its values and vision with others, to the creation of a movement that transforms the life of a single individual or an entire world.

Whenever we set out to make change, when we draw on the love of humankind, we go through these stages. We believe they are universal.

(ME)VOLUTION MODEL

(me)volution is a journey and it is a model; a model of transformational change.

On the next page you will see the (me)volution model laid out in its entirety – all seven steps – from *Compulsion* through to *Empowerment*. As you move through this book and discover each step for yourself, refer back to this model. Use it as your guide.

So fold over the corner of the page so it's easy to come back to. Or, pop a yellow post-it note on it. Or, be very 21st century and take a photo of it. Print it out and stick it on the wall above the chair you're sitting on now. Use it in any way that takes your fancy - for it is *your* model, here to guide you on your journey

CHANGE BEGINS WITH ME...

ME VOLUTION

THE TRANSFORMATION MODEL

1

COMPULSION

"I MUST"

AWARENESS AND OPPORTUNITY

2

COMMITMENT

"I WILL"

PLANNING

3

CONFIDENCE

"I CAN"

MOVE TO ACTION

4

ACTION

"I DO"

IMPACT

5

VISION

"WE SEE"

CLARITY OF PURPOSE

6

VALUES

"WE BELIEVE"

RECRUIT/JOIN

7

EMPOWERMENT

"WE BUILD"

SHARE THE VISION — MULTIPLY

The journey you take in yourself

Tunisian fruit vendor Mohamed Bouazizi, 26, doused himself with gasoline and set the world on fire.

His protest was against mistreatment by local officials. His death in early January 2011 ultimately led to the fall of the government of President Ben Ali. This, in turn, stoked the confidence of people across the Arab world and set a domino effect in motion that has rewritten (and continues to transform) the political face of the Middle East.

A young Tunisian man experienced (me)volution. His compulsion to do something, to make his voice heard, and to make the ultimate sacrifice, gave the people of his region the compulsion, and in turn the confidence to rise up and reach for what they believed was justly theirs.

We have entered the era of (me)volution – an era in which opportunities and information flow in an unprecedented fashion, allowing the individual to instigate transformational change in a way that simply wasn't possible just a few years ago. We have been gifted the unique potential to change the world. Our voice matters. Dissatisfaction can be shared. An idea or vision can be shared and inspire others like never before.

In many ways (me)volution reflects democracy in its purest form. Instead of having to fight to fit into a centralized, vertical, hierarchical system, each and every one of us can be players. The days of professional lobbyists who lurk in dark corners of the corridors of power representing private interests rather than the public good may well be numbered.

Today, we can all be influencers, creating opportunities for a better society. We can channel that energy, that talent and all the time that people commit through philanthropy and volunteering, and amplify it without having to endure the pain of manoeuvring in a vertical system. We can set the agenda, confident that the policy-makers and the politicians will follow us.

(me)volution may well be the most important journey that any of us take. And when we engage in change, it is a journey that we *all* can take.

So let us begin it. The first step on this journey begins in a small village in India.