



How To Change The World Discussion Guide

Director: Jerry Rothwell
Year: 2015
Time: 110 min

You might know this director from:

Town of Runners (2012)
Donor Unknown (2010)
Heavy Load (2008)
Deep Water (2006)

FILM SUMMARY

Greenpeace is a universally recognized organization and brand. The environmental agency is synonymous with the modern-day eco-movement, and its high-profile campaigns still manage to capture the imagination of global citizens. But where did it all begin? How was such a colossal enterprise initially established?

Director Jerry Rothwell sets out to explore all that on the big screen. *HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD* utilizes a mixture of never-before-seen footage from the Greenpeace archives, cut with recent interviews with some of the key figures present during those early days. With actor Barry Pepper providing the voice-over by reading from the writings of founder Robert Hunter, the documentary escapade into the not-so-humble beginnings of Greenpeace to its global expansion is compelling and inspiring.

“This was a glorious revolution... We were talking about a new way of being in the world,” stated early member Rex Weyler, who was originally brought on to photograph the movement. The initial members sailed to stop the nuclear bomb testing on the Alaskan island of Amchitka, setting the precedence for activism to come. From the volatile shores of early 1970’s Vancouver, Canada, a city brimming with hippies, draft dodgers, ecologists, peace lovers, and rule breakers, Greenpeace was formed.

HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD touches as much upon the human drama as the environmental damage these first Greenpeacers were working to draw attention to. Again in the words of Weyler, “The weakest link was always going to be ourselves.” As a guidebook to the modern activist, the story of how Greenpeace in its early stages of trial, error, and the big bad ego, *HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD*’s five-step structure provides insight into Greenpeace in particular and activism in general, offering a guide for the modern eco-warrior.

FILM THEMES

Director Rothwell extracts five rules from Hunter's writing about how change happens. Less of a step-by-step guide than a set of mantras for changemakers, based on the experience of the early Greenpeacers. We discuss them below.

1: PLANT A MIND BOMB

The concept of the 'mind bomb' comes from Hunter's early writings, particularly *The Storming Of The Mind* (1971). For Hunter, 'mind bombs' were made possible by the new communications technology of global television which could broadcast powerful images into people's homes which might shift their understanding. The pre-Internet version of something going viral, a mind bomb is an image that has the potential to send a shockwave across the planet, capturing the attention and imagination of the public. Sailing a small boat into a nuclear test zone was Greenpeace's first 'mind bomb'.

2: PUT YOUR BODY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS

Being a successful campaigner takes courage: and "actions speak louder than words." In order to bring about true change and affect a situation, physically placing yourself somewhere and showing what you believe in goes a long way, and speaks to people, whatever their language, culture, or belief system. Greenpeace's early actions were all tremendous acts of courage – and so showed the public how much the issues mattered to the activists.

3: FEAR SUCCESS

It seems to be a human trait that once success comes knocking, egos are the first to answer, and the line between what one originally set out to achieve and the ego of success becomes detrimentally blurred. Even a grassroots movement, the pulse of activism, and the desire to change the status quo can become polluted and diluted by the sting of success. What really matters to a movement is to remain clear in vision and not sidelined by the sweet simplicity of fame, money or power which proved to be the undoing the founders of Greenpeace.

4: THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE ORGANIZED

Hunter wrote that revolutions cannot be organized or led, because they spring from an impulse in society that happens everywhere at once. Once success hit, Greenpeace exploded. Offices sprung up around the globe without any reference to a central organization. The question arose: Where is the source? Where is the voice of the organization? Is Greenpeace an organization? Populated by a group of visionaries who were great at springing into activist action but not so great at organizing a cohesive global movement, it became clear that in order to stop things from spinning out of control, some order would need to be established. The revolution dislikes to be controlled, but the machine behind it must function as a unified force.

5: LET THE POWER GO

"What do we do with power" asked Bob Hunter when he met Allen Ginsberg. "Let it go before it freezes in your hand" advised Ginsberg. True success comes not in one's ability to grasp onto something and direct it but also in the understanding when power needs to be distributed and taken up by others.. The more fighting between the founding members of Greenpeace, the less effective the movement became. By letting go of control from their Vancouver base and creating Greenpeace International, the organization blossomed into what it is today.

"A revolution can go no faster nor further than people themselves."

Robert Hunter

"Success can poison the essence of what you try to do."

Rex Weyler

"Ecology is flow. You and I are most definitely part of the flow. Everything we do affects the flow. Everything the flow does affects us."

Robert Hunter

FILM FACTS:

- HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD premiered on the opening night of the 2015 Sundance Film Festival, where it won the World Cinema Editing Award and was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize in the documentary field, and it has gone on to win numerous other awards.
- In his youth, British director Jerry Rothwell was politically active in nuclear disarmament and other movements, and considers all of his films to be political in the broadest sense. In 2007, he was involved in a project that had him looking through Greenpeace film archives in Amsterdam, which sparked his interest in the writings of Bob Hunter and inspired HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD. First pitched in 2008, it took an additional 6 years to find funding for the film, and filmed interviews with key Greenpeace individuals began in early 2014. Rothwell's next film is about a French wine producer who realizes that wine in his name is being auctioned from a year he didn't produce it, and uncovers a multi-million dollar scam in the vintage wine industry.
- HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD is a UK/Canadian co-production.
- "Time" magazine named Bob Hunter one of the 20th century's top 10 environmental heroes.
- As of 2015 the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, founded by original Greenpeace member Paul Watson, had active campaigns in place for bluefin tuna, dolphins, reefs, sea lions, seals, sharks, turtles, and whales.
- Modern-day Greenpeace International has offices in over 40 countries on 6 continents, and is supported by 2.8 million individuals around the globe. The organization's main campaigns include saving the Arctic, stopping global warming, protecting the oceans and forests, stopping nuclear weapons, and promoting sustainable agriculture and toxic-free living.
- Robert Hunter was born in 1941 in Manitoba, where he was raised by his French-Canadian mother. He had four children. He died in 2005 after a 7-year battle with prostate cancer, and his ashes were scattered in the Galápagos Islands, in northern Canada near the Arctic, and on top of an Antarctic iceberg.
- Emily Hunter, Robert's daughter, works with Greenpeace, Sea Shepherd, and a number of other activist organizations as a writer and filmmaker. She published her first book, "The Next Eco-Warriors," in 2011.
- The I Ching, or Book of Changes, dates back to the Western Zhou period (1046–771 B.C.). A version for the 21st century, the 'app of changes', can be found here: <http://blog.brian-fitzgerald.net/mystic-hippies-and-the-i-ching-app-of-changes>
- Three underground nuclear bomb tests were carried out on the Alaskan island of Amchitka. A further two were planned, but cancelled after the protests.

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. Greenpeace International is active across the globe. Find out more about their work, and consider donating time or funds to their mission. Greenpeace.org
2. Sea Shepherd, founded by Paul Watson, is an active organization campaigning for marine wildlife conservation. Find out more, and consider contributing to their work. Seashepherd.org
3. Read "Greenpeace: How a Group of Ecologists, Journalists, and Visionaries Changed the World" by Rex Weyler, photographer and one of the organization's founding members featured in the film.
4. Watch "Eco-Pirate: The Story of Paul Watson," a 2011 documentary on the life journey of Greenpeace founding member Paul Watson, the subsequent founder of Sea Shepherd.

We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.