**The Last Humans Project:**

**How Civil Society Can Save Humanity**

April 11, 2020

Trent Batson

[trentbatson@mac.com](mailto:trentbatson@mac.com)

[www.thelasthumans.org](http://www.thelasthumans.org)

**A Message to the People of the Earth**

We are now, all of us humans -- the last human species to survive -- unable to determine our “normal.” We thought we could. We thought we were in charge.

Each and every one of us will be affected by serial global pandemics and serial climate disasters during the rest of this century. We have learned this hard lesson in just the past 2 months.

We humans have been far too “successful” as a species in not only surviving but growing in numbers. Too successful because, in our drive to grow, we have unbalanced our ecosystem, our Earth. The dynamics of the ecosystem we now live within are not the same as the ecosystem in which we evolved. We can no longer set the terms for our “normal.” It is being set for us at this point. We are now, as a species, back to a survival of the fittest challenge, but it is now “survival of the fittest society.”

Our society, we just learned, is not “fit” for the new ecosystem. Why? We humans now depend absolutely on fragile global systems of vital supplies, finance, health, scientific discovery, disaster response, information and on to all aspects of the global civilization we have created. We thought we had ended evolution and that we humans now lived in a built environment impervious to nature. We forgot that mother nature is more powerful than we are.

Mother nature has been permissive, it would seem, while our numbers exploded over the past couple of centuries. We thought we had “conquered” the earth. We humans managed to overcome plagues and famines and even survived the most recent Ice Age, while our numbers continued to grow.

But now, nature is generating new pathogens each year that keep us back on our heels. Earth generates extreme heat and storms and fires and floods that reveal how unprepared we are as a species for the global ecology in which we now live.

How do we become “fit” in the new challenges of “natural selection”? Certainly not organized as we now are as a civilization. Political leaders have failed us again and again. During the pandemic that is still with us, 2 men have contributed to a disastrous mess: the political leaders in China and in the U. S. have inadvertently collaborated, it can be argued, to spread a pandemic. How did we humans get to the point where the whole world can suffer because of the whims, fallacies and needs of 2 men? The rise of autocracy in the world in this century – the invalidation of democracy through social media attacks and manipulation, the suppression of human rights – shows us once again, as with the wars of the last century, that relying too exclusively on *civic* society is dangerous for our species.

Instead, the strength of our species is shown in our *civil* society.

Because our society is organized primarily as civic society, an anachronism from the luxury time of the past few centuries when we humans could be reckless and when we could thoughtlessly increase wealth and concentrate power, believing that riding the horse of unbridled capitalism would go on forever, we have experienced disasters. This is not a political tract, however, but a wakeup call to all of us humans that we can survive and actually become a far better inhabitant of the earth if we organize around civil society globally and diminish the role of civic society.

# Civic and Civil Society

from [**The McKay Foundation**](http://www.mckayfund.org/)

[Civic Society](http://loreguide.org/search/node/Civic%2BSociety): is the sphere of a person’s public life within the state that includes his or her role as citizen, i.e. as voter and political agent, and as someone beholden to governments’ laws and regulations. In this way, a person’s life in civic society is abstract: all citizens (theoretically) have equal identity and status in this realm and their personal uniqueness and life circumstance are irrelevant.

[Civil Society](http://loreguide.org/search/node/Civil%2BSociety): is the sphere of a person’s public life that is exempted from state definition, in which a person’s uniqueness and subjectivity is manifest through personal choice, expression, and affiliation. Religious institutions, commercial firms and organizations, community groups and cultural affiliations, nonprofit and advocacy organizations, universities and educational institutions, various membership organizations, and arts organizations are all vital spheres of civil society. [Civil society](http://loreguide.org/search/node/Civil%2Bsociety) thus allows for a multitude of public spheres to emerge in which diverse voices can share their experiences, express their opinions, and organize others to influence public policy and other [civic society](http://loreguide.org/search/node/civic%2Bsociety) institutions. <http://loreguide.org/info/civic-and-civil-society>

Civil society -- the whole non-profit sector along with corporations and government agencies working collaboratively toward life-positive goals, and across borders, can move global civilization toward a sustainable model of organization. And, notice that “civilization” has the word “civil” in it, not the word “civic.” We do not say “civicization.”

It has been reassuring to see the global medical community working to share information as doctors and researchers hunt for a cure. Yet there is no denying that this border-blind enemy [the SARS-CoV2 virus] appeared just when the term “de-globalization” was entering our lexicon — thanks to the rise of nationalism, protectionism and general skepticism about cross-border cooperation of all kinds. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/its-time-to-return-to-globalization-but-this-time-lets-do-it-right/2020/04/27/b5e8b442-88b4-11ea-8ac1-bfb250876b7a_story.html> King Abdullah of Jordan

Instead of “[de-globalization](https://www.gzeromedia.com/will-covid-19-kill-globalization)” — as some are advocating — I see us all benefiting from a “re-globalization.” This time, though, we must concentrate on getting it right, aiming for a renewed integration of our world that centers on the well-being of its people. A re-globalization that strengthens and builds capacities within our countries and ushers in true cooperation rather than competition. A re-globalization that recognizes that a single country, acting alone, cannot succeed. One country’s failure is every country’s failure. [same URL]

The Last Humans Project is about a global shift from civic society -- government that is overly influenced by wealth and power to the detriment of most people -- toward civil society that has the common good as a goal and operating ethic. This shift can be led, in part, by higher education, a force of 19,400 institutions of higher education and the roughly 250,000,000 students enrolled at any one time around the world. This “force” has not been organized, yet, to address in a unified way the current or pending disasters of this century.

One way this “force” can be unified to deal with global disasters is with the concept of building the workforce for human adaptation to the climate crisis that now includes pandemics.

This Project is about how to build this adaptation workforce. Other parts of the Last Humans website explain how higher education can play a decisive role.