RAFFI
MOTIVATIONAL SONGS

#belugagrad
#educators
#parents
Turning seventy is a milestone that makes one think. A feeling of gratitude goes with entry to elderhood, and thoughts of what we will leave behind when we’re gone. As part of my legacy, I wanted to offer in one place many songs that I wrote and recorded not as a children’s entertainer, but in my role as a self-described global troubadour—inspired by world leaders and global events.

The songs in this collection, on diverse themes, are born of love, my love of life and this beautiful planet we call home. They span 1990-2017, and owe much to the mentors in various sectors from whom I’ve had the privilege of learning. In 1990, during a sabbatical filled with reflection, I realized that the world’s various crises did not exist in silos; they were interconnected. It dawned on me that I think in systems, and that I enjoy asking big questions and seeing the big picture. So I delved into a broad self-education, to better understand our world and the one my very young fans were growing up in. This was a growth experience and likely prompted the Child Honouring vision that visited me in 1997. And so I was moved to write songs outside of my kids’ music genre, for older ears.

The themes in this album include peace, diversity, social justice, sustainability, indigenous cultures, climate change, citizen duty, new economy, interconnectedness, early childhood advocacy. As I hear these songs again, I hear aspects of my Child Honouring philosophy taking voice. I have sung many of these songs during my conference keynotes, singing live to the recorded rhythm tracks, and I’ve felt the joy of their power to connect.

I am indebted to the likes of Theo Colborn, David Suzuki, Riane Eisler, David Korten, Hazel Henderson, Fraser Mustard and many more for teaching and inspiring me. My dream is that some of these songs might become as well known as my kids’ favourites. Within my lifetime, I hope.

If this work inspires you to become a changemaker, you have my admiration and gratitude. Humanity needs changemakers now more than ever, co-creating a world that honours its young and respects our blessed biosphere—for generations to come.

– Raffi
**WAVE OF DEMOCRACY**

During the 2016 US presidential campaign, Senator Bernie Sanders made a historic and almost successful run without any corporate funding. His slogan, “a future to believe in” was quite fitting, given two things: a) peoples’ overall disenchantment with status quo politics, and b) the climate crisis that threatens the future of humanity. I was so inspired by Bernie’s movement that I wrote this song to both mark the moment, and to offer a “We The People” chorus to his heroic effort to reclaim democratic rights and values from the 1% oligarchy of billionaires. I also wrote it to prod listeners to register to vote, indeed to get engaged in election issues and to actually get out and vote.

It’s critically important that young people understand voting as a fundamental democratic right—one that people around the world have given their lives defending. Democracy needs every one of us to vote.

**COOL IT**
(THE GLOBAL COOLING SONG)

In the 1989 CBC Radio series “It’s A Matter Of Survival,” David Suzuki stressed the severity of the climate threat. In 2007 Suzuki made a bus tour of Canada to promote awareness of climate change and the urgent need for substantive action to reduce GHG emissions. I wrote “Cool It” to sound the alarm musically, with a rockabilly rhythm and the simple chorus, “Cool it, cool it, cool this planet down—cool it, cool it down!” In 2010 I met with renowned climatologist James Hansen (formerly of NASA), whose book, *Storms Of My Children*, came with the subtitle: *The Truth About The Coming Climate Catastrophe And Our Last Chance To Save Humanity.* Such is the urgency this issue holds. Global warming is the cause of climate change, but “change” hardly conveys the scale of the crisis: the greatest threat that humanity faces. Can we mobilize enough climate action in time? Can the massive shift now underway to a low-carbon economy happen fast enough? We’ll need our young people in this endeavour. The climate crisis requires a rapid change to clean renewable sustainable energy sources. Imagine if climate activists embraced a catchy climate anthem such as “Cool It.” And if teachers taught this climate song to their students. On Earth Day, at least.

**COUNT WITH ME**

Can a three minute song offer a critique of the GDP measure of societal progress and call for an alternative “Well-being Index”? That’s what I set out to do here, in simple terms that anyone can understand. “Adding indiscriminately, that’s what’s wrong with the GDP/Counting only the money, makes no sense to me...” goes the chorus, pointing to the GDP’s disregard for social and environmental impacts of doing business. And yet, the social and planetary worlds are indeed what sustain all of us and give our lives meaning. We can’t work towards a sustainable society with such an outdated and dangerously misleading measure of progress.

In a 2006 Rethinking Development conference in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, I had the pleasure of singing this song before an august group in the front row including the Prime Minister of Bhutan (known for its Happiness Index), and sustainability champion Ray Anderson, CEO of Interface, a multinational US floor coverings company. That night, I sang with an unusual backing chorus of alternative economists. They each held a sheet of the lyrics in one hand, an outstretched tape measure in the other. We called ourselves Raffi and The Indicators. Sustainability is not limited to sufficiency in the natural world. It also involves the quality of our relationships, and how we live in community. (I like to say that, in our minds, ecology needs a human face: your child’s.) And most importantly, respectful relationships with the young in our care and in our society. During the recording of this song, I saw an opportunity to include the 9 Child Honouring principles. You can hear them before the last chorus. Taken together, they offer a compass for conscious living, with the child at heart.

**LETTER TO A NATION**

Jack Layton’s farewell letter to Canada was written in his dying days. This NDP party leader inspired Canadians and was so popular he was given a state funeral. His final words: “Love is better than anger, hope is better than fear, optimism is better than despair/So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic, and we’ll change the world.” I was very moved by this message, and it became the chorus of this tribute song. And optimism is better than despair. Cue our response: change the world.

**SUSTAINABILITY**

Do you know any songs by on this topic? I didn’t, so I wrote one. I’ve often said that Child Honouring is the children-first way of sustainability. Sustainability is the principle of a society living in a way that meets current needs and yet allows future generations to meet their needs as well. Why does “vibrant democracy” begin verse one? Because a child-honouring society depends on democratic good governance.

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COMMUNION

This 2009 song got its spark at the Santa Barbara home of Barbara Marx Hubbard where I was visiting at the same time as physicist Nassim Haramein. When talk turned to the mystery of love and to the as yet unknown “origin of spin” (as Nassim put it) in sub-atomic particles, a song was born. I wrote most of the lyrics and melody there and completed the song after my return home. On guitar I play it in “Open D” tuning, and that offers a fine resonance of open strings and barre chords. Love is our mother tongue, an innate treasure that allows everything worthwhile to unfold. The more we commune in that language, the happier we’ll be.

COUNTING ON YOU

What a delight it was to get to know the one and only Jane Goodall. Our 1999 meeting was so fruitful it inspired three songs: Jane Jane (a tribute song), Roots And Shoots Everywhere (for a time, the theme song of Jane Goodall Institute), and this one. “The children of generations to come.. are counting on you” I sing, “Hoping and counting on you.” All young people have similar basic needs and aspirations: to be seen and respected, to be provided the nurture and provisions needed for innate love to be activated, to grow and to flourish. “Counting on you to be true, to your heart’s purpose / Counting on you to come through, counting on you.”

HUMAN CHILD

In the infant of every culture we see the universal human. Everywhere in our world, a baby at six months is the same physiological being, regardless of ethnicity, skin colour, or culture. This is Child Honouring’s good news that we might shout from the rooftops! Throughout the entire world, we humans are fundamentally the same. We laugh the same, we cry the same. I wanted to write a song that celebrates this fact, and so “human child” came to mind. That’s what all these different babies born in various settings are: human.

We may hear the term “third world” used in reference to countries that are either monetarily poor or in some way less developed than ours. It’s a term that perhaps separates “first world” people from their less privileged cousins. But when we remember how much we have in common as human beings, we can celebrate diversity with wonder, we can marvel at the diverent ways of language and culture that raise our young. Child Honouring is a universal ethic that can be lived in locally wise ways. “We can be one world, we can be one world...”

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

In 1999, during a meeting with Fraser Mustard at his Toronto office, the eminent child development proponent and author of the Early Years Report pointed his finger at me and said, “Raffi, you’ve got to write a song with which to influence policy makers on the vital importance of the early years!” So I went home and wrote one. In 2000 at the World Bank’s first Investing In Early Years conference, I spoke for 10 minutes on Child Honouring and then sang this song, it was a hit, with the entire audience singing along and clapping on the off beat. Afterwards, a man in a three piece suit shook my hand and said, “Thanks for singing to us; nobody ever does. “

GREEN DREAM

What parents wouldn’t want for their child a bright future? On a planet currently in peril, we all want for our young a bright green future. Green in the best sense of the word. Verdant. Thriving. As I often say, I write not about issues, but about solutions, desired states. I dreamed of a cello section for this recording and, as luck would have it, a stirring cello intro kicks off the song. Children’s voices end it with “I have a green dream.”
RESISTO DANCING

This song got its inspiration in Toronto, near the hotel I was staying in many years ago. I noticed a fast food advertisement spouting a line out of Star Trek, “Resistance is futile.” That got me songwriting, in a whole new way. I combined with a talented beat box artist to create a hip hop rhythm on which a very different set of lyrics could play. “Impossible samba, improbable rhumba, dancing in your junglehood...” The rest came easily, including a Bob Dylan reference and a Shakespeare lyric. I’ve enjoyed singing this song as part of my Child Honouring conference keynotes, where once 30 teachers came up on stage to dance. Imagine. I call the genre, “hip hop.”

TWEET ME RIGHT

Troubadours can be inspired by a historical event, a new moment in time. When an unprecedented “Arab Spring” emerged in Tunisia and then Egypt, I was moved by this democracy movement to write a song that also turned out to be my debut post on Twitter. For this “Cairo tango” I turned to the dumbeg and qanun, and the resultant rhythm guided my guitar playing and accordion as well. Tongue in cheek references to Twitter short forms such as “brb” and “lol” added spice to a rather unusual play on words.

NO WALL TOO TALL

My favourite Bible story is about Jesus clearing the temple of the money changers. Reflecting on that tale, I wondered if I could express its essence in a current musical fable. Money seems to run everything, has accumulated tremendous power in corporations and how they influence even democratic elections. Can we drive the tyrant monetary system out of the temple (the commons) and return it to a service role? Can the monolithic financial system collapse? Recalling that two colossal systems crashes (the Berlin Wall, aka the Iron Curtain, and apartheid in South Africa) that nobody could predict, I contrasted the power of money with the power of love in this song. As history has shown, anything is possible.

SALAAM SHALOM

In a setting that has been the scene of ongoing violence for decades, Palestinians and Israelis have the same root word for peace: salaam, in Arabic, shalom, in Hebrew. Ripe for a song, I thought. Two cultures live side by side, and their words for peace are so similar, I put these words side by side in the chorus. This dancing prayer for peace in the Middle East comes with regional dumbeg drum, and the qanun’s rhythmic string tapping sounds. Add violin, accordion and a children’s chorus, and a song is born.

TOMORROW’S CHILDREN

Cultural historian and author Riane Eisler (longtime friend and colleague) inspired this song after I read her book Tomorrow’s Children: A Blueprint For Partnership Education In The 21st Century. This tribute song to Eisler is in a minor key, with one of the verses in D major, and can be sung either a capella or with guitar. Lyrically, there’s an early nod to a Naomi Klein book title (No Logo), and a reference to climate change: “Closing ranks to save the shoreline, tomorrow’s children lead the way.” It also produced what, for me, has become a memorable verse: “If not for wonder, if not for reverence / If not for love, why have we come here?”
FIRST PEOPLES

I wanted to write a musical tribute to indigenous people around the world. Once I had the chorus and basic rhythm of this song, it was fun to simply list a few dozen names of various indigenous peoples, and see how well they followed each other in melody and cadence. “Huron, Cree, Ojibwa, Yanomami..” I felt some narration would be helpful, and luckily, my young friend Severn Cullis-Suzuki (then 14) agreed to do it. She voiced it perfectly. We owe a great deal to our original ancestors, among whom many peoples are undergoing a proud revival of their ancient cultural heritage. “First peoples of this world, the test of time endured.”

EVERGREEN EVERBLUE

When I took a one year sabbatical from kids’ entertainment (in 1990), I was struck by the worldwide Earth Day gatherings that year and that Time magazine showed an “Endangered Earth” on its Planet Of The Year cover. The state of environmental destruction and the impending global warming crisis moved me to record an ecology album, Evergreen Everblue. The song has a “help this planet Earth” refrain and the chorus is emphatic: “At this point in time, it’s up to me it’s up to you.” Accompanied by a children’s choir, I got to sing this song and two others (from this album) at the General Assembly hall of the United Nations. I also sang it in 1993 at the Kyoto Global Forum, in the presence of Mikhail Gorbachev.

WHERE WE ALL BELONG

Sometimes it seems there’s no end to creative expression about the profound interconnectedness of our species. A circle where we all belong, that’s the vision that inspired this song. Our planet is “home of all the children here and those yet to come.” In this ballad and in real life, we are all kin.

RAY OF HOPE

This tribute song to the late Ray Anderson, who had an epiphany in his mid sixties after reading Paul Hawken’s brilliant book, The Ecology of Commerce. CEO of a leading floor coverings multinational, Anderson realized his company was a major polluter. He then directed his managers to embrace sustainability as their guiding principle and they turned the company inside out in an effort to cut waste. This was not only good for the Earth, it was good for company profits. Ray was a CEO with great heart, one who took seriously his impact on this world and on future generations. In 2011, I sang this song at his memorial service near Atlanta, Georgia.

TURN THIS WORLD AROUND

One of my all time heroes was Nelson Mandela. In 2000, Mandela gave a speech in which he urged global leaders to “turn this world around, for the children!” Immediately, I thought that line had great musical potential. And so, this song was born. “We heard it from Mandela, turn this world around—for the children, turn this world around!” I’ve closed many Child Honouring keynote presentations with this song, and it brings people to their feet. In 2001, I had the honour of singing it at Ryerson University in Toronto, before Mandela and his wife Graca Machel. When finished, I went to shake Mandela’s hand and the great man stood up to greet me with the best handshake ever. Unforgettable.
BONUS SONGS

BIG BIG SALE

I was walking slowly down a Vancouver street (in pain from a troubling bout of sciatica), when I saw a sign in a store with the words BIG SALE. Right then, I got a flash of inspiration, about a liquidation sale metaphor for a warming world on course for devastating sea level rise. (“Big big big sale, liquidation—everything must go, everything.”) A requiem for a planet is not an easy thing to contemplate, let alone to express musically. So I took a consciously disjointed approach, with sung lyrics within a background of harp and synth sounds and, near the end, a few breaths. The capacity to feel our sadness in the “climate catastrophe” (as some have called it) can perhaps help to move us—individually and collectively—to take urgent action. We must rapidly shift to decarbonize our economy, to transition as fast as possible to clean renewable energies. For a viable future for the world’s children.

SONG FOR THE DALAI LAMA

The leader of the Tibetan people, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has long inspired me with his wisdom, his moral authority, and his humanity. Twice I travelled to northern India to meet with him at his office in Dharamsala, grateful for the opportunity to have conversations about Child Honouring. When he came to Vancouver in 2004, I sang for him the song I wrote specifically for that occasion, accompanied by the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and the Vancouver Multicultural Orchestra, as well as 100 kids wearing shirts in the colours of Tibetan prayer flags. The mood was electric as I sang, “White, red, yellow, green, blue flying high / Prayer flags in the breeze flying high.” And at the chorus, the 2500 people in the Orpheum Theatre sang in unison: “Om mani padme om, Dalai Lama om.” It was a very moving experience.

RAFFI MOTIVATIONAL SONGS

Songs to motivate, inspire and lead to civic duty.
An album to inspire changemakers.

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