

THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER—UPDATED AND EXPANDED

THE NEW CONFESSIONS OF AN ECONOMIC HIT MAN

**15 EXPLOSIVE NEW CHAPTERS WITH
NEW REVELATIONS ON:**

- HOW ECONOMIC HIT MEN HAVE SPREAD IN THE UNITED STATES AND WORLDWIDE
- HOW THE EHM SYSTEM IS MORE TREACHEROUS TODAY THAN EVER
- WHAT WE CAN DO, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, TO SAVE OUR FREEDOM

**JOHN
PERKINS**



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Praise for *The New Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*

“When I read *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, I could not have known that, some years later, I would be on the receiving end of the type of ‘economic hit’ that Perkins so vividly narrated. This book resonates with my experiences of the brutish methods and gross economic irrationality guiding powerful institutions in their bid to undermine democratic control over economic power. Perkins has, once again, made a substantial contribution to a world that needs whistle-blowers to open its eyes to the true sources of political, social, and economic power.”

—**Yanis Varoufakis, former Minister of Finance, Greece**

“I loved *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. Ten years ago it exposed the real story. *The New Confessions* tells the rest of that story—the terrible things that have happened since and what we all can do to turn a death economy into a life economy.”

—**Yoko Ono**

“*The New Confessions* offers deep insights into the nefarious ways economic hit men and jackals have expanded their powers. It shows how they came home to roost in the United States—as well as the rest of the world. It is a brilliant and bold book that illuminates the crises we now face and offers a road map to stop them.”

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“Perkins provides a profound analysis of two forces vying to define the future. One is intent on preserving systems that serve the few at the expense of the many, while the other promotes a new consciousness of what it means to be human on this beautiful, fragile planet. This powerful book inspires and empowers actions that manifest an awakening to our collective ecosystem and the rebirth of humanity—an ECOrenaissance.”

—**Marci Zaroff, ECOlifestyle pioneer/serial entrepreneur and founder of ECOfashion brands *Under the Canopy* and *Metawear***

"*The New Confessions* is an amazing guide to co-creating a human presence on our planet that honors all life as sacred. It exposes our past mistakes; offers a vision for a compassionate, sustainable future; and provides practical approaches for making the transition between the two. A must-read for anyone who loves our beautiful home, Earth."

—**Barbara Marx Hubbard, bestselling author and President, Foundation for Conscious Evolution**

"As one who has helped thousands of people grow their businesses, I've learned firsthand the importance of facing the crises old economic models created and acting positively to develop new approaches. Perkins's experiences, his exposé of the failures, his clear vision of what needs to be done, his call to action, and the sense of joy he feels for being part of this consciousness revolution are deeply inspiring."

—**Sage Lavine, women's business mentor; CEO, Conscious Women Entrepreneurs; and founder of the Entrepreneurial Leadership Academy**

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"[This] book seems to have tapped into a larger vein of discontent and mistrust that Americans feel toward the ties that bind together corporations, large lending institutions and the government—a nexus that Mr. Perkins and others call the 'corporatocracy.'"

—***New York Times***

"This riveting look at a world of intrigue reads like a spy novel...Highly recommended."

—***Library Journal***

"[A] parable for all Americans who try to deny the heartbreaking fact that our society's affluence often comes at the wider world's expense."

—***Utne Reader***

"Imagine the conceptual love child of James Bond and Milton Friedman."

—***Boston Herald***

"Perkins claims may seem unthinkable to most Americans. But the evidence, looking at the world economy, is damning...the citizens of this country need to be willing to examine the actions of our political and corporate leaders and demand that they stop the destruction that is making the world an increasingly dangerous place to live."

—***Charlotte Observer***

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OF AN ECONOMIC HIT MAN**

JOHN PERKINS



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The New Confessions of an Economic Hit Man

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To my grandmother, Lula Brisbin Moody, who taught me the power of truth, love, and imagination, and to my grandson, Grant Ethan Miller, who inspires me to do whatever it takes to create a world he and his brothers and sisters across the planet will want to inherit.

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CONTENTS

Preface xi

Introduction: The New Confessions 1

PART I: 1963-1971

- 1 Dirty Business 7
- 2 An Economic Hit Man Is Born 15
- 3 “In for Life” 24
- 4 Indonesia: Lessons for an EHM 32
- 5 Saving a Country from Communism 35
- 6 Selling My Soul 40

PART II: 1971-1975

- 7 My Role as Inquisitor 49
- 8 Civilization on Trial 53
- 9 Opportunity of a Lifetime 58
- 10 Panama’s President and Hero 65
- 11 Pirates in the Canal Zone 70
- 12 Soldiers and Prostitutes 73
- 13 Conversations with the General 77
- 14 Entering a New and Sinister Period in Economic History 83
- 15 The Saudi Arabian Money-Laundering Affair 88
- 16 Pimping, and Financing Osama bin Laden 101

PART III: 1975-1981

- 17 Panama Canal Negotiations and Graham Greene 109
- 18 Iran’s King of Kings 117
- 19 Confessions of a Tortured Man 122
- 20 The Fall of a King 126
- 21 Colombia: Keystone of Latin America 129

- 22 American Republic vs. Global Empire 133
- 23 The Deceptive Résumé 140
- 24 Ecuador's President Battles Big Oil 150
- 25 I Quit 155

PART IV: 1981-2004

- 26 Ecuador's Presidential Death 161
- 27 Panama: Another Presidential Death 166
- 28 My Energy Company, Enron, and George W. Bush 170
- 29 I Take a Bribe 176
- 30 The United States Invades Panama 183
- 31 An EHM Failure in Iraq 192
- 32 September 11 and Its Aftermath for Me, Personally 199
- 33 Venezuela: Saved by Saddam 206

PART V: 2004-TODAY

- 34 Conspiracy: Was I Poisoned? 215
- 35 A Jackal Speaks: The Seychelles Conspiracy 221
- 36 Ecuador Rebels 226
- 37 Honduras: The CIA Strikes 233
- 38 Your Friendly Banker as EHM 238
- 39 Vietnam: Lessons in a Prison 242
- 40 Istanbul: Tools of Modern Empire 249
- 41 A Coup against Fundación Pachamama 255
- 42 Another EHM Banking Scandal 260
- 43 Who Are Today's Economic Hit Men? 265
- 44 Who Are Today's Jackals? 276
- 45 Lessons for China 283
- 46 What You Can Do 289
- 47 Things to Do 299

Documentation of Economic Hit Man Activity,
2004-2015 309

John Perkins Personal History 339

Notes 343

Acknowledgments 354

Index 357

About the Author 364

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PREFACE

Economic hit men (EHMs) are highly paid professionals who cheat countries around the globe out of trillions of dollars. They funnel money from the World Bank, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and other foreign “aid” organizations into the coffers of huge corporations and the pockets of a few wealthy families who control the planet’s natural resources. Their tools include fraudulent financial reports, rigged elections, payoffs, extortion, sex, and murder. They play a game as old as empire, but one that has taken on new and terrifying dimensions during this time of globalization.

I should know; I was an EHM.

I wrote that in 1982, as the beginning of a book with the working title *Conscience of an Economic Hit Man*. The book was dedicated to the heads of state of two countries, men who had been my clients, whom I respected and thought of as kindred spirits – Jaime Roldós of Ecuador and Omar Torrijos of Panama. Both had just died in fiery crashes. Their deaths were not accidental. They were assassinated because they opposed that fraternity of corporate, government, and banking heads whose goal is global empire. We EHMs failed to bring Roldós and Torrijos around, and the other type of hit men, the CIA-sanctioned jackals who were always right behind us, stepped in.

I was persuaded to stop writing that book. I started it four more times during the next twenty years. On each occasion, my decision to begin again was influenced by current world events: the US invasion of Panama in 1989, the first Gulf War, Somalia, the rise of Osama bin Laden. However, threats or bribes always convinced me to stop.

In 2003, the president of a major publishing house that is owned by a powerful international corporation read a draft of what had now become *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. He described it as

“a riveting story that needs to be told.” Then he smiled sadly, shook his head, and told me that since the executives at world headquarters might object, he could not afford to risk publishing it. He advised me to fictionalize it. “We could market you in the mold of a novelist like John le Carré or Graham Greene.”

But this is not fiction. It is the true story of my life. It is the story of the creation of a system that has failed us. A more courageous publisher, one not owned by an international corporation, agreed to help me tell it.

What finally convinced me to ignore the threats and bribes?

The short answer is that my only child, Jessica, graduated from college and went out into the world on her own. When I told her that I was considering publishing this book and shared my fears with her, she said, “Don’t worry, Dad. If they get you, I’ll take over where you left off. We need to do this for the grandchildren I hope to give you someday!” That is the short answer.

The longer version relates to my dedication to the country where I was raised; to my love of the ideals expressed by our Founding Fathers; to my deep commitment to the American republic that today promises “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” for all people, everywhere; and to my determination after 9/11 not to sit idly by any longer while EHMs turn that republic into a global empire. That is the skeleton version of the long answer; the flesh and blood are added in the chapters that follow.

Why was I not killed for telling this story? As I will explain in more detail in the pages of *The New Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, the book itself became my insurance policy.

This is a true story. I lived every minute of it. The sights, the people, the conversations, and the feelings I describe were all a part of my life. It is my personal story, and yet it happened within the larger context of world events that have shaped our history, have brought us to where we are today, and form the foundation of our children’s futures. I have made every effort to present these experiences, people, and conversations accurately. Whenever I discuss historical events or re-create conversations with other people, I do so with the help of several tools: published documents; personal records and notes; recollections — my own and those of others who participated; the five manuscripts I began previously; and

historical accounts by other authors – most notably, recently published ones that disclose information that formerly was classified or otherwise unavailable. References are provided in the endnotes, to allow interested readers to pursue these subjects in more depth. In some cases, I combine several dialogues I had with a person into one conversation to facilitate the flow of the narrative.

My publisher asked whether we actually referred to ourselves as economic hit men. I assured him that we did, although usually only by the initials. In fact, on the day in 1971 when I began working with my teacher, Claudine, she informed me, “My assignment is to mold you into an economic hit man. No one can know about your involvement – not even your wife.” Then she turned serious. “Once you’re in, you’re in for life.”

Claudine pulled no punches when describing what I would be called upon to do. My job, she said, was “to encourage world leaders to become part of a vast network that promotes US commercial interests. In the end, those leaders become ensnared in a web of debt that ensures their loyalty. We can draw on them whenever we desire – to satisfy our political, economic, or military needs. In turn, they bolster their political positions by bringing industrial parks, power plants, and airports to their people. The owners of US engineering/construction companies become fabulously wealthy.”

If we faltered, a more malicious form of hit man, the jackal, would step to the plate. And if the jackals failed, then the job fell to the military.

)

Now, nearly twelve years after *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* was first published, that original publisher and I know that it is time for a new edition. Readers of the 2004 book sent thousands of e-mails asking how its publication impacted my life, what I am doing to redeem myself and change the EHM system, and what actions they can take to turn things around. This new book is my answer to those questions.

It is also time for a new edition because the world has changed radically. The EHM system – based primarily on debt and fear – is even more treacherous now than it was in 2004. The EHMs have

radically expanded their ranks and have adopted new disguises and tools. And we in the United States have been “hit” – badly. The entire world has been hit. We know that we teeter on the edge of disaster – economic, political, social, and environmental disaster. We must change.

This story *must* be told. We live in a time of terrible crisis – and tremendous opportunity. The story of this particular economic hit man is the story of how we got to where we are and why we currently face crises that often seem insurmountable.

This book is the confession of a man who, back when I was an EHM, was part of a relatively small group. People who play similar roles are much more abundant now. They have euphemistic titles; they walk the corridors of Fortune 500 companies like Exxon, Walmart, General Motors, and Monsanto; they use the EHM system to promote their private interests.

In a very real sense, *The New Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* is the story of this new EHM breed.

It is your story, too, the story of your world and mine. We are all complicit. We must take responsibility for our world. The EHMs succeed because we collaborate with them. They seduce, cajole, and threaten us, but they win only when we look the other way or simply give in to their tactics.

By the time you read these words, events will have happened that I cannot imagine as I write them. Please see this book as offering new perspectives for understanding those events and future ones.

Admitting to a problem is the first step toward finding a solution. Confessing a sin is the beginning of redemption. Let this book, then, be the start of our salvation. Let it inspire us to new levels of dedication and drive us to realize our dream of balanced and honorable societies.

John Perkins
October 2015

The New Confessions

I'm haunted every day by what I did as an economic hit man (EHM). I'm haunted by the lies I told back then about the World Bank. I'm haunted by the ways in which that bank, its sister organizations, and I empowered US corporations to spread their cancerous tentacles across the planet. I'm haunted by the payoffs to the leaders of poor countries, the blackmail, and the threats that if they resisted, if they refused to accept loans that would enslave their countries in debt, the CIA's jackals would overthrow or assassinate them.

I wake up sometimes to the horrifying images of heads of state, friends of mine, who died violent deaths because they refused to betray their people. Like Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, I try to scrub the blood from my hands.

But the blood is merely a symptom.

The treacherous cancer beneath the surface, which was revealed in the original *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, has metastasized. It has spread from the economically developing countries to the United States and the rest of the world; it attacks the very foundations of democracy and the planet's life-support systems.

All the EHM and jackal tools – false economics, false promises, threats, bribes, extortion, debt, deception, coups, assassinations, unbridled military power – are used around the world today, even more than during the era I exposed more than a decade ago. Although this cancer has spread widely and deeply, most people still aren't aware of it; yet all of us are impacted by the collapse it has caused. It has become the dominant system of economics, government, and society today.

Fear and debt drive this system. We are hammered with messages that terrify us into believing that we must pay any price, assume any debt, to stop the enemies who, we are told, lurk at our doorsteps. The problem comes from somewhere else. Insurgents.

Terrorists. “Them.” And its solution requires spending massive amounts of money on goods and services produced by what I call the corporatocracy – vast networks of corporations, banks, colluding governments, and the rich and powerful people tied to them. We go deeply into debt; our country and its financial henchmen at the World Bank and its sister institutions coerce other countries to go deeply into debt; debt enslaves us and it enslaves those countries.

These strategies have created a “death economy” – one based on wars or the threat of war, debt, and the rape of the earth’s resources. It is an unsustainable economy that depletes at ever-increasing rates the very resources upon which it depends and at the same time poisons the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the foods we eat. Although the death economy is built on a form of capitalism, it is important to note that the word *capitalism* refers to an economic and political system in which trade and industry are controlled by private owners rather than the state. It includes local farmers’ markets as well as this very dangerous form of global corporate capitalism, controlled by the corporatocracy, which is predatory by nature, has created a death economy, and ultimately is self-destructive.

I decided to write *The New Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* because things have changed so much during this past decade. The cancer has spread throughout the United States as well as the rest of the world. The rich have gotten richer and everyone else has gotten poorer in real terms.

A powerful propaganda machine owned or controlled by the corporatocracy has spun its stories to convince us to accept a dogma that serves its interests, not ours. These stories contrive to convince us that we must embrace a system based on fear and debt, accumulating stuff, and dividing and conquering everyone who isn’t “us.” The stories have sold us the lie that the EHM system will provide security and make us happy.

Some would blame our current problems on an organized global conspiracy. I wish it were so simple. Although, as I point out later, there are hundreds of conspiracies – not just one grand conspiracy – that affect all of us, this EHM system is fueled by something far more dangerous than a global conspiracy. It is driven by concepts that have become accepted as gospel. We believe that all economic

growth benefits humankind and that the greater the growth, the more widespread the benefits. Similarly, we believe that those people who excel at stoking the fires of economic growth should be exalted and rewarded, while those born at the fringes are available for exploitation. And we believe that any means – including those used by today’s EHMs and jackals – are justified to promote economic growth; preserve our comfortable, affluent Western way of life; and wage war against anyone (such as Islamic terrorists) who might threaten our economic well-being, comfort, and security.

In response to readers’ requests, I have added many new details and accounts of how we did our work during my time as an EHM, and I have clarified some points in the previously published chapters. More importantly, I have added an entirely new part 5, which explains how the EHM game is played today – who today’s economic hit men are, who today’s jackals are, and how their deceptions and tools are more far-reaching and enslaving now than ever.

Also in response to readers’ requests, part 5 includes new chapters that reveal what it will take to overthrow the EHM system, and specific tactics for doing so.

The book ends with a section titled “Documentation of EHM Activity, 2004–2015,” which complements my personal story by offering detailed information for readers who want further proof of the issues covered in this book or who want to pursue these subjects in more depth.

Despite all the bad news and the attempts of modern-day robber barons to steal our democracy and our planet, I am filled with hope. I know that when enough of us perceive the true workings of this EHM system, we will take the individual and collective actions necessary to control the cancer and restore our health. *The New Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* reveals how the system works today and what you and I – all of us – can do to change it.

Tom Paine inspired American revolutionaries when he wrote, “If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace.” Those words are as important today as they were in 1776. My goal in this new book is nothing less than Paine’s: to inspire and empower us all to do whatever it takes to lead the way to peace for our children.

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PART I: 1963-1971

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Dirty Business

When I graduated from business school in 1968, I was determined not to participate in the Vietnam War. I had recently married Ann. She too opposed the war and was adventurous enough to agree to join the Peace Corps with me.

We first arrived in Quito, Ecuador, in 1968. I was a twenty-three-year-old volunteer assigned to develop credit and savings cooperatives in communities deep in the Amazon rain forest. Ann's job was to teach hygiene and child care to indigenous women.

Ann had been to Europe, but it was my first trip away from North America. I knew we'd fly into Quito, one of the highest capitals in the world – and one of the poorest. I expected it to be different from anything I'd ever seen, but I was totally unprepared for the reality.

As our plane from Miami descended toward the airport, I was shocked by the hovels along the runway. I leaned across Ann in the middle seat and, pointing through my window, asked the Ecuadorian businessman in the aisle seat next to her, “Do people actually live there?”

“We are a poor country,” he replied, nodding solemnly.

The scenes that greeted us on the bus ride into town were even worse – tattered beggars hobbling on homemade crutches along garbage-infested streets, children with horribly distended bellies, skeletal dogs, and shantytowns of cardboard boxes that passed as homes.

The bus delivered us to Quito's five-star hotel, the InterContinental. It was an island of luxury in that sea of poverty, and the place where I and about thirty other Peace Corps volunteers would attend several days of in-country briefings.

During the first of many lectures, we were informed that Ecuador was a combination of feudal Europe and the American Wild West. Our teachers prepped us about all the dangers: venomous

snakes, malaria, anacondas, killer parasites, and hostile head-hunting warriors. Then the good news: Texaco had discovered vast oil deposits, not far from where we'd be stationed in the rain forest. We were assured that oil would transform Ecuador from one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere to one of the richest.

One afternoon, while waiting for a hotel elevator, I struck up a conversation with a tall blond man who had a Texas drawl. He was a seismologist, a Texaco consultant. When he learned that Ann and I were poor Peace Corps volunteers who'd be working in the rain forest, he invited us to dinner in the elegant restaurant on the top floor of the hotel. I couldn't believe my good fortune. I'd seen the menu and knew that our meal would cost more than our monthly living allowance.

That night, as I looked through the restaurant's windows out at Pichincha, the mammoth volcano that hovers over Ecuador's capital, and sipped a margarita, I became infatuated with this man and the life he lived.

He told us that sometimes he flew in a corporate jet directly from Houston to an airstrip hacked out of the jungle. "We don't have to endure immigration or customs," he bragged. "The Ecuadorian government gives us special permission." His rain forest experience included air-conditioned trailers and champagne and filet mignon dinners served on fine china. "Not quite what you'll be getting, I assume," he said with a laugh.

He then talked about the report he was writing that described "a vast sea of oil beneath the jungle." This report, he said, would be used to justify huge World Bank loans to the country and to persuade Wall Street to invest in Texaco and other businesses that would benefit from the oil boom. When I expressed amazement that progress could happen so rapidly, he gave me an odd look. "What did they teach you in business school, anyway?" he asked.

I didn't know how to respond.

"Look," he said. "It's an old game. I've seen it in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Now here. Seismology reports, combined with one good oil well, a gusher like the one we just hit..." He smiled. "Boomtown!"

Ann mentioned all the excitement around how oil would bring prosperity to Ecuadorians.

“Only those smart enough to play the game,” he said.

I’d grown up in a New Hampshire town named after a man who’d built a mansion on a hill, overlooking everyone else, using the fortune he’d amassed by selling shovels and blankets to the California gold miners in 1849. “The merchants,” I said. “The businessmen and bankers.”

“You bet. And today, the big corporations.” He tilted back in his chair. “We own this country. We get a lot more than permission to land planes without customs formalities.”

“Like what?”

“Oh my God, you do have a lot to learn, don’t you?” He raised his martini toward the city. “To begin with, we control the military. We pay their salaries and buy them their equipment. They protect us from the Indians who don’t want oil rigs on their lands. In Latin America, he who controls the army controls the president and the courts. We get to write the laws – set fines for oil spills, labor rates, all the laws that matter to us.”

“Texaco pays for all that?” Ann asked.

“Well, not exactly...” He reached across the table and patted her arm. “You do. Or your daddy does. The American taxpayer. The money flows through USAID, the World Bank, CIA, and the Pentagon, but everyone here” – he swept his arm toward the window and the city below – “knows it’s all about Texaco. Remember, countries like this have long histories of coups. If you take a good look, you’ll see that most of them happen when the leaders of the country don’t play our game.”¹

“Are you saying Texaco overthrows governments?” I asked.

He laughed. “Let’s just say that governments that don’t cooperate are seen as Soviet puppets. They threaten American interests and democracy. The CIA doesn’t like that.”

That night was the beginning of my education in what I’ve come to think of as the EHM system.

Ann and I spent the next months stationed in the Amazon rain forest. Then we were transferred to the high Andes, where I was assigned to help a group of campesino brick makers. Ann trained handicapped people for jobs in local businesses.

I was told that the brick makers needed to improve the efficiency of the archaic ovens in which their bricks were baked.

However, one after another they came to me complaining about the men who owned the trucks and the warehouses down in the city.

Ecuador was a country with little social mobility. A few wealthy families, the *ricos*, ran just about everything, including local businesses and politics. Their agents bought the bricks from the brick makers at extremely low prices and sold them at roughly ten times that amount. One brick maker went to the city mayor and complained. Several days later he was struck by a truck and killed.

Terror swept the community. People assured me that he'd been murdered. My suspicions that it was true were reinforced when the police chief announced that the dead man was part of a Cuban plot to turn Ecuador Communist (Che Guevara had been executed by a CIA operation in Bolivia less than three years earlier). He insinuated that any brick maker who caused trouble would be arrested as an insurgent.

The brick makers begged me to go to the *ricos* and set things right. They were willing to do anything to appease those they feared, including convincing themselves that, if they gave in, the *ricos* would protect them.

I didn't know what to do. I had no leverage with the mayor and figured that the intervention of a twenty-five-year-old foreigner would only make matters worse. I merely listened and sympathized.

Eventually I realized that the *ricos* were part of a strategy, a system that had subjugated Andean peoples through fear since the Spanish conquest. I saw that by commiserating, I was enabling the community to do nothing. They needed to learn to face their fears; they needed to admit to the anger they had suppressed; they needed to take offense at the injustices they had suffered; they needed to stop looking to me to set things right. They needed to stand up to the *ricos*.

Late one afternoon I spoke to the community. I told them that they had to take action. They had to do whatever it would take — including taking the risk of being killed — so that their children could prosper and live in peace.

My realization about enabling that community was a great lesson for me. I understood that the people themselves were

collaborators in this conspiracy and that convincing them to take action offered the only solution. And it worked.

The brick makers formed a co-op. Each family donated bricks, and the co-op used the income from those bricks to rent a truck and warehouse in the city. The ricos boycotted the co-op, until a Lutheran mission from Norway contracted with the co-op for all the bricks for a school it was building, at about five times the amount the ricos had paid the brick makers but half the price the ricos were charging the Lutherans — a win-win situation for everyone except the ricos. The co-op flourished after that.

Less than a year later, Ann and I completed our Peace Corps assignment. I was twenty-six and no longer subject to the draft. I became an EHM.

When I first entered those ranks, I convinced myself that I was doing the right thing. South Vietnam had fallen to the Communist north, and now the world was threatened by the Soviet Union and China. My business school professors had taught that financing infrastructure projects through mountains of World Bank debt would pull economically developing nations out of poverty and save them from the clutches of communism. Experts at the World Bank and USAID reinforced this mind-set.

By the time I discovered the falsehoods in that story, I felt trapped by the system. I had grown up feeling poor in my New Hampshire boarding school, but suddenly I was making a great deal of money, traveling first class to countries I'd dreamed about all my life, staying in the best hotels, eating in the finest restaurants, and meeting with heads of state. I had it made. How could I even consider getting out?

Then the nightmares began.

I woke in dark hotel rooms sweating, haunted by images of sights I had actually seen: legless lepers strapped into wooden boxes on wheels, rolling along the streets of Jakarta; men and women bathing in slime-green canals while, next to them, others defecated; a human cadaver abandoned on a garbage heap, swarming with maggots and flies; and children who slept in cardboard boxes, vying with roaming packs of dogs for scraps of rubbish. I realized that I'd distanced myself emotionally from these things.

Like other Americans, I'd seen these people as less than human; they were "beggars," "misfits" – "them."

One day my Indonesian government limo stopped at a traffic light. A leper thrust the gory remnants of a hand through my window. My driver yelled at him. The leper grinned, a lopsided toothless smile, and withdrew. We drove on, but his spirit remained with me. It was as though he had sought me out; his bloody stump was a warning, his smile a message. "Reform," he seemed to say. "Repent."

I began to look more closely at the world around me. And at myself. I came to understand that although I had all the trappings of success, I was miserable. I'd been popping Valium every night and drinking lots of alcohol. I'd get up in the morning, force coffee and pep pills into my system, and stagger off to negotiate contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

That life had come to seem normal to me. I had bought into the stories. I was taking on debt to support my lifestyle. I was operating out of fear – the fear of communism, losing my job, failure, and not having the material things everyone told me I needed.

One night I woke up with the memory of a different type of dream.

I had walked into the office of a leader in a country that had just discovered it had lots of oil. "Our construction companies," I told him, "will rent equipment from your brother's John Deere franchise. We'll pay twice the going rate; your brother can share his profits with you." In the dream I went on to explain that we'd make similar deals with friends of his who owned Coca-Cola bottling plants, other food and beverage suppliers, and labor contractors. All he had to do was sign off on a World Bank loan that would hire US corporations to build infrastructure projects in his country.

Then I casually mentioned that a refusal would bring in the jackals. "Remember," I said, "what happened to..." I rattled off a list of names like Mossedegh of Iran, Arbenz of Guatemala, Allende of Chile, Lumumba of the Congo, Diem of Vietnam. "All of them," I said, "were overthrown or..." – I ran a finger across my throat – "because they didn't play our game."

I lay there in bed, once again in a cold sweat, realizing that this dream described my reality. I had done all that.

It had been easy for me to provide government officials like the one in my dream with impressive materials that they could use to justify the loans to their people. My staff of economists, financial experts, statisticians, and mathematicians was skilled at developing sophisticated econometric models that proved that such investments – in electric power systems, highways, ports, airports, and industrial parks – would spur economic growth.

For years I also had relied on those models to convince myself that my actions were beneficial. I had justified my job by the fact that gross domestic product did increase after the infrastructure was built. Now I came to face the facts of the story behind the mathematics. The statistics were highly biased; they were skewed to the fortunes of the families that owned the industries, banks, shopping malls, supermarkets, hotels, and a variety of other businesses that prospered from the infrastructure we built.

They prospered.

Everyone else suffered.

Money that had been budgeted for health care, education, and other social services was diverted to pay interest on the loans. In the end, the principal was never paid down; the country was shackled by debt. Then International Monetary Fund (IMF) hit men arrived and demanded that the government offer its oil or other resources to our corporations at cut-rate prices, and that the country privatize its electric, water, sewer, and other public sector institutions and sell them to the corporatocracy. Big business was the big winner.

In every case, a key condition of such loans was that the projects would be built by our engineering and construction companies. Most of the money never left the United States; it simply was transferred from banking offices in Washington to engineering offices in New York, Houston, or San Francisco. We EHM's also made sure that the recipient country agreed to buy airplanes, medicines, tractors, computer technologies, and other goods and services from our corporations.

Despite the fact that the money was returned almost immediately to the corporate members of the corporatocracy, the recipient country (the debtor) was required to pay it all back, principal plus interest. If an EHM was completely successful, the loans

were so large that the debtor was forced to default on its payments after a few years. When this happened, we EHMs, like the Mafia, demanded our pound of flesh. This often included one or more of the following: control over United Nations votes, the installation of military bases, or access to precious resources such as oil. Of course, the debtor still owed us the money – and another country was added to our global empire.

Those nightmares helped me see that my life was not the life I wanted. I began to realize that, like the Andean brick makers, I had to take responsibility for my life, for what I was doing to myself and to those people and their countries. But before I could grasp the deeper significance of this understanding that had begun to stir within me, I had to answer a crucial question: How did a nice kid from rural New Hampshire ever get into such a dirty business?

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