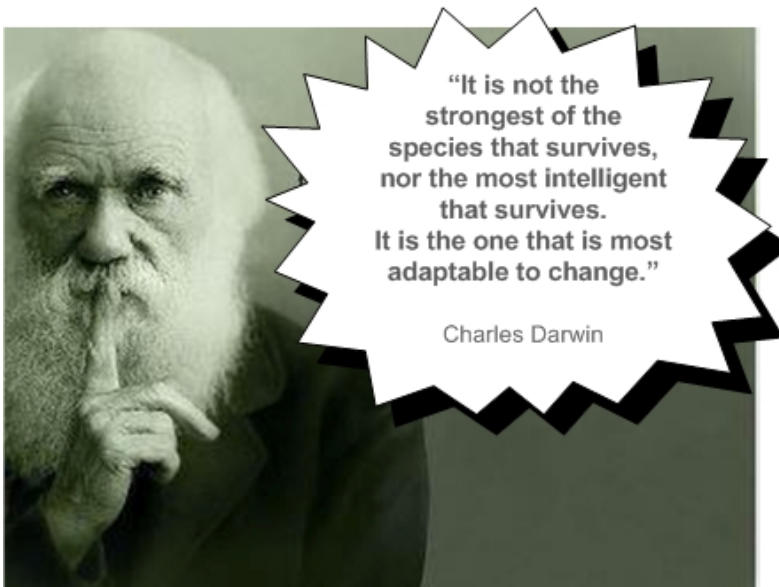# ENTERPRISING EXODUS

Last May I sat in Eteaket in Edinburgh with around 15 other women. We had come together to explore why there were so few women in the most senior of leadership positions in our large organisations and institutions. Almost all of us had worked in such organisations and had left. Most of us had then set up our own small businesses. For many of us - it appeared - the cost of staying had simply become too great…. to our spirits, our families, the balance in our lives, our integrity, our desire to contribute more purposefully and in more honouring, human-affirming ways. For us, quite simply, there was more to life than working in contexts that, whilst financially beneficial, were not life-enhancing, soul-sustaining. Creating a context in which we could BE more of ourselves became more important than acquiring more money, more status, more power, more influence, more… more… more.

As I have reflected on that extraordinary dialogue over the last 12 months, a question kept presenting itself to me: if so many women keep leaving, how will we ever re-dress the imbalance of the constituencies within these monolithic entities? I was working from an assumption that to effect change from within, one would have to work from the inside and so the corollary of that led to a question about how to support women to stay inside them. I have sat with those questions for nearly a year…. And have only just begun to notice these embedded assumptions.

Being part of something where success is defined in one-dimensional terms of BIGGER, MORE, BEST so often leads to distorted judgement, division, separation, rejection, ejection. The assumption propping up what is essentially a distorted capitalist pursuit is that only the brightest, strongest, fastest, biggest, best survive. This mindset is a form of entrapment AND it is NOT true. Darwin is misquoted: what he actually said is….

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change."

Charles Darwin

This view is affirmed by what we now understand through the study of complexity sciences.

Additionally, the more we go for bigger, brighter, stronger the more we can end up driving diversity out of our systems. Lack of diversity in a system is a sure-fire way to ensure its decline and death. We recruit based on assessment protocols that are driven by outdated paradigms – paradigms that are not fit-for-purpose in our complex, unpredictable world. No wonder we have so many monochrome Boards which recruit in their own image which operate on somewhat self-serving, back-scratching ways: e.g. the unspoken, unwritten code that operates undercover in so many, 'so-called' independent Remuneration committees – 'you vote for my pay-rise and I'll vote for yours…'. Maybe the system is simply too far gone – too broke, to repair?

My previous assumption that we have to change such institutions (e.g. by changing the chemistry of Boards) is of course simply an option; another is that we could encourage – amplify - the exodus and let these organisations drive themselves to extinction. Meanwhile we could celebrate and magnify the transformative powers that are inherent in the DNA of every woman. We are life-giving vessels in which transformation is made possible. What more might be possible if each and every one of us amplified the principles of our creative-force-for-good by bringing to life, new living productive systems. Many of us have already joined in with this movement…. Across the world and its hemispheres, women are making change happen – in our new 'enterprises', in our villages and towns and cities. Perhaps our next challenge is how to connect ourselves differently to make more sustainable, life-enhancing change occur to save our world?

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❋ people empowered ❋ passion ignited ❋ power synthesised ❋ partners united ❋ performance enhanced ❋ purpose accomplished

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