

November 1, 2016



Peter Kiarie with his three year old son, his wife and his infant daughter at their home outside of Nairobi, Kenya. Learn more about Peter's story [here](#). Image from WorldVasectomyDay.com.

Humanity Needs You

Jonathan Stack

Thirty-five years ago, I spent almost a year living in Peru's Amazon forest amongst the Cacataibo. At the time, 100-150 members of this semi-nomadic people still remained, but their way of life was being rapidly destroyed by a recent infusion of cattle ranchers and narco-traffickers.

Twenty-eight years ago, I started my career as a filmmaker. One of my first projects took me to Harlem where I told the story of crack cocaine ravaging the souls of its citizens. Over the next half decade, in an attempt to counter the chaos, I made films about resilience, resistance and restraint.

In 1996, I entered the gates of Louisiana's Angola prison, one of America's oldest and largest maximum-security facilities. For the next 20 years I made dozens of films, helped start a prison t.v. station and told endless tales of rehabilitation and reform.

On September 11, 2001, from the shadows of the falling World Trade Center, I felt the terror of the day and feared the violence I suspected would soon be unleashed. Over the next ten years, in my effort to make sense of the madness and mayhem, I got entangled in what I called the 'people paradox', a disturbing conundrum in which the same species and even the same person, capable of brilliant acts of kindness, could also be so cruel.

Seeking to tell the story about the inconvenient truth of humanity, my partner, Simon Nasht introduced me to Dr. Paul Ehrlich. I had read Paul's book the *Population Bomb* in High School, but like so many others, an issue that had once framed my youthful activism, had receded from my consciousness. To my good fortune I traveled with Paul to Costa Rica where I had the opportunity to experience two things he loves dearly: bird watching and talking. Then, a year later we were again together in Stanford to film a multi-hour conversation.

We all know that Paul is not only our canary in the mine, but a funny, irreverent, brilliant and vibrant man whose spirit inspires emotion and whose ideas demand action. The opportunity to just listen and learn was a dream come true.

What no one knows is the connection between Paul and World Vasectomy Day. As chance would have it, the week before I traveled to Stanford for the interview, I was in Kenya making a film about Dr. Doug Stein, one of the most passionate vasectomists on the planet, and a man committed to lowering the carbon footprint one vasectomy at a time.

On May 9th, 2012, while on the border of Uganda in the town of Busia, I filmed a man named George Mbogah. George had traveled 26 hours by bus to get his vasectomy and so I asked him why he chose this option when so many others preferred to leave the responsibility of family planning up to women. He said:

"There are three main reasons: One is out of love for my one daughter. I dream she'll have a better life than my own. Two, my wife almost died during the last pregnancy. I love her dearly and as much I might love another child, I am not willing to sacrifice her well-being. I also know that the earth does not need more humanity, that we are not here to overrun the planet, but to run with it."

It was that same night that I dreamt up the idea to create an event to aggregate individual acts of kindness into a collective movement for social good. I reserved the URL, WorldVasectomyDay.org and the next day asked all the men who got their vasectomies to shout out, "I support World Vasectomy Day". Two days later I flew to Stanford, and one week later, on my way home to NY, inspired by Dr. Paul Ehrlich's impassioned protestations, I set an intention that would change my life forever. Sitting alone on the red eye home, I wrote down, *"In one year, I will convince 100 doctors in 25 countries to do 1,000 vasectomies in 24 hours"*.

Well, here it is 4 years later and with 1,000 participating providers in 40 countries and a likely number of 10,000 vasectomies as part of our November 18th celebration, we are not only the largest male oriented family planning event in history, but probably one of

the most effective movements for reducing the carbon footprint. We've expanded our 'brand' of course as we've grown and now we talk about 'celebrating responsible men' and 'acts of love', but at our heart, we are always a band of brothers putting our balls on the line for Mother Earth.

So this short video is my way of saying thank you to Paul and to all of you who support his vision and dream. It is the first of what we hope are many 2- and 3-minute pieces inspired by Dr. Paul Ehrlich's gentle, and not so gentle, genius.

[Video: Humanity Needs You!](#)

And to learn how to be part of World Vasectomy Day, visit our [site](#)!

MAHB-UTS Blogs are a joint venture between the University of Technology Sydney and the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere. Questions should be directed to joan@mahbonline.org.

MAHB Blog: <http://mahb.stanford.edu/blog/humanity-needs-you/>