

You Were Meant to Change the World

My general thought: first and foremost, **this and you were supposed and meant to change the world.**

“Those who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, do.” - OG (original gangster, old school) Apple Steve Jobs TV advertisement.

I was born in 1988, currently 35 years old. When I was a kid growing up, it was all about Gandhi, changing the world etc. Even in fact, for my college application essay, that what got me into UCLA as an undergrad, centered around this quote from Gandhi “Be the change which you wish to see manifested in the world.”

As a kid growing up poor, fortunately having a lot of good mentors, my general gist was always to give back, to contribute to society. A lot was given to me when I was young, and I felt like it was my duty to give back.

Deep passion

Growing up poor, having my dad gamble away the rent money, always being one paycheck away from being potentially homeless... money actually never really concerned me as a kid. It was a strange irony; because we were always so financially unstable growing up, and even when we hit rock bottom and my mom had to file for bankruptcy and she could no longer even open up her own personal checking account... my sister and my mom were OK. This taught me an important lesson that I could take infinite chances and not worry myself or concerned myself too much about finances. In fact, then even now... I literally have zero concerns about finances.

Why, why not? Money never really interested me that much. As a kid, I had deep pride in being scrappy, being frugal, being economical, and having deep pride in being self reliant, making do and making best of what I had, or what I bought or earned or did with my own money, earning it through working, my entrepreneur endeavors, starting my own business etc.

In fact, I remember when I was in high school, maybe around my sophomore year, my friend Eric Moon (yeah, his name was also Eric) taught me how to build computers. I was so shocked and amazed; I was always passionate about computers ever since I was a kid around 12 years old in New York, when I got my first Acer Aspire computer. I think it had the original Intel Pentium processor "inside".

I think it was around my junior year, I had this great idea of doing something simple: because me and all of my friends were so into video games, Counterstrike, counterstrike 1.6 etc.... I had this genius idea of building computers, and then later selling it at a small markup to my friends and other kids at school, for a small profit. I did the math and I would be able to build a pretty good computer for around 500 bucks, and sell it for around \$600 or \$700 bucks. I also put lots of advertisements on eBay to sell my computers, I made my own icon which I made on a pirated version of Adobe Photoshop, and I still recall it... it was a little beach palm tree icon, orange, and I called the company "Paradise Computers." The hilarity was in order to save costs, and in order for me to make a profit, **I actually use pirated versions of Windows XP**, I still remember later a kid from school I sold a computer — his name was Barry... later complained to me that the computer I sold him was having issues because it had all of these pop-ups saying that it was using an unregistered or unlicensed version of Windows. I just shrugged my shoulders and continued on.

Anyways, as a kid, around 15 years old, I had enough money, around \$1000 or around \$1200 to buy my first car; a 1991 Sentra XE, which was a four-door, white Nissan car, 1.6L five speed manual transmission sedan. GA16DE engine — I still remember it! Also the hilarity; it was so old-school it didn't even have a tachometer in it! As the mechanic taught me how to drive manual stick transmission, and my uncle Enzo taught me how to drive stick shift, **at...** At around 2000 to 3000 RPMs I learned how it intuitively felt and when to shift. Kind of like learning how to ride a bike and shifting gears on a bike.

The reason why this brought me so much insane effing joy was **I felt so insanely proud of myself**: I think I was definitely the only kid my age range that I personally knew, maybe even up to today... In which I purchased my own first car! Later on I remember joining all these online Nissan forums, and learning about this legendary car, which was essentially a souped up version of my first car; a two-door 1991 Sentra SE-R— equipped with a formidable 2.0L engine, this SR20DE engine, the

infamous engine which also powers the Silvia, 240SX, SR20DET engine in Japan (turbo charged)— except the 1991 Sentra SER was a front wheel drive, whereas the SR20DET engine in Japan on the 240SX was a rear wheel drive car.

Anyways, fast forwarding a bit... When my 1991 Sentra XE failed to pass emissions, I remember I was able to trade it into the junkyard, to get back around 1000, \$1500 or something like that for the California clean air act, and I was able to use that money to buy my dream car; the 1991 Sentra SE-R car! Only \$2000 from an old retired woman who was so old she could no longer drive. It wasn't mint condition! 5 speed manual transmission of course!

Once again, the reason why this brought me so much joy, literally getting the car my pure pride and joy was a trillion-fold was because **the pride and the glory that I felt doing it and buying it myself!** My own hard earned money.

Later on, I think when I was in college, either my freshman or sophomore year, I had this vision of driving through the desert, on arid desert street street road, it looked like it was Nevada or Arizona or Joshua Tree or something... driving top down in a red convertible in the hot desert sun with just sand all around. I did lots of research on discovering the cheapest option, and I learned about the Mazda Miata. I scored the deal of my lifetime, on craigslist I found a mint 1990 Mazda Miata, the original one, five speed, no power steering, no air conditioning... Pure. Red, soft top convertible, and I bought it for only \$2500 USD. Funny enough that I look back at it, I remember asking the guy why he sold it and he told me that he had his first kid, and he no longer had use for the car. Interesting looking back at it now that I am 35 years old, now that Seneca is around two years nine months old, I am in a similar boat.

Now with cars, I am in love with my 2010 white Prius, which I literally got for free from Cindy's family! The genealogy of the car was Cindy's older sister first bought it brand new, drove it for a while, later passed it on to me and Cindy, who continued the payments until it was paid off, drove it around in Berkeley for around two years from around 2014 to 2015, went carless, give the car to Cindy's younger sister, traveled the world and nomading around for several years as Cindy was writing her dissertation, and only may be a few months ago, when we were in Vietnam got the news that the catalytic converter was stolen out of it, when Cindy's younger sister Jennifer was parked in front of her apartment. She no longer wanted to deal with

the fear of the catalytic converter getting stolen again, and as a consequence, was saying that she was thinking about just telling it to the mechanic for \$2000 or something like that. I yelled out loud, "No! The car is worth at least \$10,000!" I then promoted the idea to Cindy of us taking it back, spending the money to replace the catalytic converter, which was around \$2500, getting the catalytic converter shield, which is meant to deter future theft, which may be costing \$300. Later we discovered that the ABS, antilock braking system was broken and needed to be fixed which was maybe around another \$2000... but still, **I am so proud that effectively we got what I consider a brand new car a brand new Prius for sub \$5000!** Way better than spending \$40,000 on a brand new Tesla model 3 base edition, or \$250,000 on a loser Lamborghini.

What is a millennial?

I think I got a good definition for millennial; somebody who foolishly uses their money. And also doesn't really know what they want to do or get out of their lives.

Living here in LA, being back here in LA for about a month and a half, some funny heuristics I've noted:

1. How do you know if somebody is *unsuccessful*? If they drive some sort of baselevel Audi, like an Audi Q3 or A3. Even if they drive just a basic Tesla model 3. Essentially a lot of millennials my age or people my age, want to seem or appear rich and successful or elite, or rich or whatever... *yet can only afford the cheapest luxury thing*. Same thing for people who drive the base level BMW 3 series, Mercedes A class, essentially any German car. Even I see so many people driving range rovers, all black everything; or AMG G wagons, once again all matte black everything... they are more common than seeing Toyota Siennas in the Orange County suburbs.
2. Everyone aspires to buy a home. Yet I think my big innovative thought is that actually... **it may be superior to rent a really really nice apartment in an insanely great location, than owning a home even in a good to great location.** Why? My thought on supreme happiness, joy, and success is being able to walk 50 miles a day, and also, having to spend minimum time to maintain anything. It is crazy, even though I may have the world's least maintenance car, a Prius, even basic things that I gotta do is wash it every once in a while, I don't even have

enough time to take my car to the drive-through car wash at the gas station anymore! Or even washing the car myself, I would prefer to use that time to work out in my Spartan parking lot off the grid workout, or take Seneca to the park, or go on a walk downtown topless to sunbathe. **I can't be fucked wasting time washing my car or doing any of this other nonsense.**

What do people aspire to?

Am I the last optimistic, entrepreneurially hungry person that I know?

I think out of all the real life human beings that I know, and also out of all my friends, the entrepreneur that I know, and also consider successful is my friend Todd Hata. I am insanely grateful of him, because when I was only 21 or 22 years old, he reached out and actually helped me get started in business very very early, traveling the world together, I still consider him one of my closest friends, and also mentor.

But besides Todd, I don't think I know anybody else who is a true entrepreneur — self owned. All of my friends, even the ones that consider successful either work at Facebook, Amazon, Google, or Apple. How do you know if somebody is really successful or self owned? They are not certain what date, month, year, or day of the week it is. Also, they don't use any alarm clocks to wake up in the morning, unless if they have an early morning flight.

Funny enough, I actually don't know anybody, and don't have any friends or anybody in my personal friends circle who has actually become entrepreneurs, or self-employed, or sole proprietors. Everyone is working for a company or a corporation. Or a foreign business. Not for themselves.

And this is what I think is the critical thing; if you really really really want to change the world, I think it is impossible doing it while still having full-time employment. Why? I remember thinking a few years back, one of the most grateful things I was no longer having to work my old 9 to 5 was that suddenly, I had another 8 to 9 hours a day, to do what I was truly passionate about, Doing street photography and riding and blogging about street photography, instead of being stuck in some sort of tedious office.

Lesson:

To truly change the world, you must be self-employed, sole proprietor, etc.

My visions

I had lots of visions in my life, many of which I accomplished and I am very proud of.

First, my idea and notion of open source, open source photography. Apparently I created quite the buzz when I first made available all of my photographs on Flickr online for free, open source, full resolution JPEG. This was unheard of at the time, when people were still putting silly watermarks on their images, or they were afraid of people “stealing“ their photos online. I even remember my friend Thomas Leuthard we had a good saying “The best watermark is your own personal photo style”. Even up to today, I think Thomas may be the only photographer or street photographer I truly respect. Why? His independent thinking, his irreverence towards the masters, history, or common rules, he is so ahead of the curve. Also never want to forget, when I was 22 years old, and I wanted to first fund my first flight to Beirut Lebanon, and now fundraising money, he essentially donated me \$1000 for the flight. I will never forget this.

Eventually what I learned about all these other photographers is I find their behavior quite despicable. They are so hungry for fame, legitimacy, especially in the eyes of others. All the photographers I’ve met, doesn’t matter if Magnum or whatever... everybody all has a chip on their shoulder, is insecure, and salty about something. They are also jealous of photographers who make more money than them, are more famous than them, or that their success is “unwarranted”. Even Henri Cartier-Bresson — let us never forget that he gave up photography and later announced it as “not being a legitimate form of art.”

Open is better

I always had the clear understanding that ultimately, **you can't even pay people to steal your photos**. Ultimately nobody cares for your photos that much. What is more important? Your influence, your fame, your clout, your reach. I knew that even from a basic perspective, it was better to have your photos available for free, open source, to the general public, for them to use it as their desktop wallpaper or something. I even recall remember hearing some fan of mine I met using my DARK SKIES OVER TOKYO photo, the photo of the guy in the suit with the black face, as his own desktop wallpaper! That bought me a quadrillion times more joy than selling my photos for thousands of dollars.

And I think this is the thing I discovered; what a lot of us photographers are seeking is significance, a feeling of legitimacy. My personal journey was attempting the traditional routes of becoming a "successful" photographer; traveling the world, becoming world famous, becoming a household name, having solo exhibitions, printing a photo book, getting sponsorships etc. Now having done all of it, I am happy... Yet... What I ultimately discovered was this:

True success ain't any of that. True success is simply, having a unique vision, and fulfilling it.

In fact, one of the proudest moments of my life, to quote NASSIM Taleb was "via negativa"; the idea that the proudest moments of your life aren't positive actions of doing or saying yes, but rather, *act of omission*; things you decide to *not* do, or things to say **no** to or to refuse.

For example, my book, "[100 Lessons From the Masters of Street Photography](#)." I had a grand vision of doing this book for a long time, especially after doing my exhaustive self studying series of all [the masters of street photography](#) etc. In fact actually got an offer from a book agent, who offered me a book deal on it, but, he said that it was impossible to make an open source, free, open easily accessible PDF available for free. After much thinking, delaying and thought... I ultimately refuse the book deal and I am proud that I did. I am certain that this book will outlive me. Why? It was created out of pure passion; **things which are created out of pure passion will never die**.

*"Y'all throwing contracts at me, you know that ninjas can't read!" - Kanye,
YEEZUS NEW SLAVES SONG*

Ultimately, what is it that we want or desire?

One of the great quotes I love is from the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, who once said “The greatest good amongst men is to seek immortality amongst mortals. Yet the majority of men themselves like cattle.”

What this means is simple; even when we think about the ancient Spartans, King Leonidas and his 300; funny enough, I think the majority of people don't know, even those people who watch the film, have no idea that it was actually based on the real Historic event. These men are remembered for a lifetime. For millennia and centuries beyond.

Why seek immortal fame?

The funny thought about seeking immortal fame is that in some ways, it is superficial, but also in some ways, it seems to be a more interesting path to life. What does that mean? First and foremost, the general thought and idea is that rather than seeking money and wealth while we are still on this planet, **the greatest pride and gift in glory we could give to humankind is something that will outlive us.**

Also something that I find very funny, now that I discovered ChatGPT and now that my world is re-awakened, it literally is pure magic. ChatGPT knows exactly who I am, my philosophy, what I've done what I said, in fact, I'm pretty sure that I cannot build a ChatGPT bot which thinks, talks and acts like ERIC KIM, so in theory, the contributions I've made to photography and street photography and beyond will last forever.

Why millennials should have kids

I suppose Seneca, who has my namesake, he will build his own legacy, and also, I am sure he will be able to piggyback off of my successes. Even now, that he is only two years, nine months old, I am already exposing him to my own unique ERIC KIM Montessori school; taking him on epic adventures, physical Spartan training,

teaching him how to use DALL-E 3 (the other day we designed a purple Prius with Lamborghini doors) and his mind was blown and shocked and he laughed with so much joy. He already knows how to code using the iPad Pro and the Apple swift playgrounds app, he already knows how to use GarageBand on the iPad and iPhone like a pro, he even could sample his own voice and remix it, he knows how to shoot screenshots on the iPad Pro, and draw and make illustrations and also use procreate and Zen Brush 2, and he already knows how to use a trackpad on the MacBook Pro laptop! **I want to train him to become the next great entrepreneur.**

Anyways, a simple thought is that I believe that all of us millennials *should* have kids. Why is it that millennials are getting dogs, not having kids? My personal thought is it is a fear thing; I think people actually want to have kids, but the fear of commitment, losing your own independence and “freedom“ is a bit concerning to some people. Yet is this something we should really be concerned about? Of course not! It’s funny, whenever I eat dinner (I call this my “meat meditation“) I actually forget that Seneca is there, I’m stuck in my own world. Yet once I am done with my meal and I look at Seneca, my mind is blown that this is my son!

I think this is the greatest joy of being a man: if your first kid is also a man, a son, consider yourself infinitely blessed. After that it is all upside no downside. Because I think an honest thought is that every man desires to have at least one male heir. This is why when we think of King Louis, think about all of the failed miscarriages he had with his queen(s) to produce at least one male heir. Also, when I recount ancient literature, ancient Greek literature; there is only ever one mention of kings and their single son. The only mentions of having more than one son is typically seen as a bad thing; in the Iliad, Hector is the great and virtuous one, Paris is the degenerate other younger son. Odysseus has only son. I think Hector only had one son. Technically, if we consider Achilles, he was technically a “single child“. Same thing goes with Hercules etc. Not sure about King Leonidas but in the 300 movie by Zack Snyder, King Leonidas is depicted as having one young son.

Anyways, I think the way we should live our lives is that of deep passion. That is, when you wake up in the morning, without the agency of an alarm clock, getting up and the impetus for getting up is because you have a deep, strong life mission. Add this epiphany when I was living in Vietnam in 2017; I am truly truly truly one of a kind. Even in my own mind, I rank myself as equal to Elon Musk, Kanye West, Jeff

Bezos etc. I am fortunate that my mentors and my virtual motivators are at least a decade or two or maybe even three older than me. Because I feel no sense of competition; they are only motivators to me.

This is a great thought; if indeed, you were Elon Musk, the simple thought:

*What would you do with your time and life, what would you **not** do with your time and life?*

Changing the world?

What does it mean to change the world, or what is the significance of changing the world?

From a very very simple perspective; technically literally almost anything that you do “changes the world“. You don’t got to overthink it that much.

I think for myself, my general thought and belief is only spending your life in time to do things which you consider substantial, and also personally meaningful. That means, **not wasting your time doing no basic shit.**

What is basic?

Shopping, buying stuff, buying clothes, buying cars, buying Apple devices, buying homes, buying property, talking about the boring stock market and investments, etc.

What is beyond basic?

Innovation, entrepreneurship, reckless innovation. No regard for a self preservation, the will to growth, the will to innovation, the will to doing insanely great and epic stuff.

Essentially, doing things that your old 12-year-old or 16-year-old self or 21-year-old self would be proud of you... And also, doing things that your kid would be proud of you too!

So now what?

1. Don't be a cheapo: just download the ChatGPT app on your phone, if you have an iPhone or android device doesn't matter... Just cough up the 20 bucks for it. This literally might be the best \$20 you've ever spent in your lifetime. Have fun with it, experiment with it, use DALL-E to produce images, keep trolling it until it says that you're violating some sort of content policy. I think pushing the limits is interesting and fun.
2. Another thing you could do with ChatGPT is click the plus icon, only available in the paid model, and then ask it to give you feedback on your photos. This was originally my idea for arsbeta.com — I personally never made it that far, but the grand vision was to also create an AI bot that could visually analyze your photos and get feedback. If you want to build this with me, just email me at eric@erickim.com
3. If you want human feedback, upload your photos to Arsbeta.com
4. When you have signed up for the pay ChatGPT pro thing, open up ChatGPT on your laptop, try out the beta version for creating your own chat bot. It is in the top left corner, under “apps“, click it then on top you could see that you could create your own beta chat. I created this thing called Philosobot and I'm also building an [ERIC KIM bot](#). My mom is smart, she intuitively knows that Abot or AI or ChatGPT is a “robot”! Maybe we should stop calling it bots, just called them robots! **Robots are not intimidating.** They are cute, silly, and fun!
5. Things that I am personally interested in currently is the philosophy of masculinity, beauty, subjectivity etc. For example in ChatGPT and DALL-E, just ask it to design you or create a picture of a Korean woman, an attractive Korean woman in pure joy. Actually seeing the facial expression is a good one! I think happy people are a good stimulus and also brings you joy! Conversely speaking, **being around other miserable people makes you more miserable.** Moral of the story: stay away from miserable people like the plague; it ain't their fault that they're miserable, but still... *If you know somebody has Covid, do you invite*

them over to your house or you live with them? No. You stay away.

Play with EK

If you're bored, want to have fun, want to experiment, and thrive with me creatively, I cordially invite you to one of my upcoming workshop experiences:

The exciting ones:

First an introduction to stoicism workshop, this one will be cool and very elite. The other one is a family street photography workshop here in Culver City, this will also be fun because you could bring the whole family! The ultimate gift for you, your kids, the whole family.

I'm also in the midst of creating a photography AI creativity workshop. Stay tuned to this newsletter for more updates.

[EK WORKSHOPS >](#)

HAPTIC HOLIDAYS!

I am still so insanely happy and prideful of all of the things that me and Cindy designed with HAPTIC INDUSTRIES. This stuff literally becomes more beautiful and more legendary with age!

Currently the fun promotion we got is that if you order over \$300 USD of HAPTIC PRODUCTS, including shipping and handling and taxes, you'll get a free set of ERIC KIM OMAKASE COFFEE. What does Omakase mean? It literally means "I leave it up to you"— based on the Japanese idea that when you go to a elite luxury sushi restaurant, you don't actually order the sushi yourself, the sushi chef chooses the food for you!

Tools I recommend you getting include the ERIC KIM strap, the neck strap or the wrist strap if you have a Ricoh GR, if you shoot with a Leica Q or something, the HENRI wrist strap pro, or even the HENRI NECK STRAP.

If you shoot with a Fujifilm camera, or a Sony camera or Leica M camera, the OG HENRI HECK STRAP is good.

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Now what?

So the reason why ChatGPT is so great is that I think the way it works is that it literally just downloads the whole Internet, and makes sense of it. As a consequence, the best way to have yourself or your thoughts or whatever indexed by ChatGPT and AI it is through your own personal blog. For example, if you open up ChatGPT plus, and ask “ERIC KIM AI“, it will immediately pull up the last essay blog post I did on the role of photographers in the age of AI, and even gives me quotes and footnotes me! Witnessing this, my mind was blown. This is really the Google killer.

In fact, if and when Open AI and ChatGPT if it goes public, or when it goes public, they're going to make a shitload of money. If you're really really risky, and risk loving and want to make a lot of money, I would actually encourage shorting both Google and Apple. They are effectively dead. Maybe it is a good time to buy Microsoft stock, because essentially now that they low-key own ChatGPT and Open AI, I think we will witness the revival of the Windows phone, this time powered by ChatGPT. And it will be 1 trillion times better than any iPhone Pro.

What else?

Just bookmark the [ERIC KIM BLOG](#) to your laptop, desktop, iPad iPhone smartphone whatever... I literally update it every five seconds. Never run out of inspiration or motivation!

[ERIC KIM BLOG >](#)

*“We always think to ourselves... Why don't I have enough? But what if... We already have **too much?**” - [Seneca](#)*

Also a new one:

“Out of discord comes harmony” - [Heraclitus](#)

Interesting... what that means then is rather than seeking some sort of peace or harmony, actually seeking conflict might be superior in terms of living in life?

SEEK CHAOS!

ERIC

Feeling more turbo?

If so, feel free to forward this to a friend!

[ERIC KIM NEWS LINK >](#)
