

The Fifteen Year Circumnavigation of the S.V. Sapien

A Grant Proposal

Abstract

We, Dena Hankins and James Lane, are sailors traveling the world in search of an accurate, globally applicable definition of civilization - a description of the ingredients and a recipe for how to use them. Over the course of our lifetimes, and more specifically during our 15 year circumnavigation of the world, we will travel by sail, solar, and human power to scores of islands and coasts in order to exchange subjective narratives of the meaning of civilization. We will find stories - myths - that can be applicable to every community's work toward creating civilization, bringing positive commonality to global society.

How can humanity ensure that we have global civilization as well as global trade? Human beings can find and apply common, successful fundamentals of civilization. If individuals around the world have local culture but also make up part of the global culture, we will have commonalities as well as differences from which to develop understanding relationships.

We will find the common ingredients of civilization by addressing these questions: what are the effects of civilization; how to you infer their causes; and how do you distill those causes into fundamentals that can be incorporated into the global community? We will explore these questions in a uniquely subjective way: by sailing around the world, finding our place in worker communities, and collecting stories and images of civilization.

Introduction

It all started when James decided to look up "civilization" in his old college dictionary. One of the definitions was "a situation of urban comfort." Time and again, we found dissatisfying definitions of civilization that focused on technology and tools. We believe that the things - the technology - of a people do not constitute civilization, but rather are byproducts of civilized behavior. We want to examine the manifestations of civilization, and we believe that those are human, social, and artistic in nature. The dictionaries say that civilization manifests itself in a plow; we say that it manifests itself in people, their relationships with each other, and the stories they imbue with their understanding of civilization.

These stories of civilization are the tools most societies use to encourage development along lines of peace and growth. We've long been multiculturalists and so knew that we weren't being taught a wide range of tools we could use for being civilized or creating a civilized society. We are two people who came of age in the last two decades of the millennium, viewing civilization from a point of view that is critical of the United States. Starting from our understanding of what the words in the Constitution mean and what we view as the misinterpretations of that document, we are trying to find a definition of civilization that can be applied to the entire planet instead of just one nation.

We are idealists and pragmatists, individualists who believe in the power of collective action, and sailors with 39 combined years of sailing experience. We are also writers and photographers, with a Master of Arts in Photography and Bachelor of Arts in English Literature between us. We feel that we are well placed to use these qualities and talents to

explore the world around us and encourage and effect change on the largest scale. We are also readers of both historical and speculative works, and we believe in both the tragic and glorious development possibilities writers before us have explored. We believe that doing our part to define civilization will help provide a proper value for civilized behavior as the human race continues the globalization process. This is our contribution to the future.

Statement of Need

The human race is riding a juggernaut named “Globalization,” the route of which will determine the future of the human race and the constituent cultures. Between the financial and corporate attempts to span the world and the individual exposure to global possibilities through the internet, people are becoming larger individuals in a smaller and smaller world. To ensure that civic, social, and respectful values have a firm place in the world people are now creating, the human race will need a better, more globally applicable understanding of how people interact in civilized ways.

Civilization has always been the force that allows people to live in close contact and work together for the good of society. As we bring unprecedented numbers of people into close contact and request that they look beyond the good of their neighborhood to the good of every person on earth, the definition of civilization will need to be refined and restated in global terms.

It does little good to define civilization in the abstract and hope that people head in that direction. We need to develop, in the next 10 to 20 years, tools that will help a global civilization form. These tools will not be born complete from the musings of philosophers. We will need to seek out the successes of human civilization now on earth and deduce the causes. We have ideas on what kinds of things might contribute to civilization – health, happiness, industry (in the old fashioned sense of having things to do and doing them, productivity is similar in today’s parlance), sustainability, usefulness, and respect, among others – but we want to maintain a careful awareness of our personal subjective filters in order that we can truly learn from people around the world, rather than merely seeking confirmation of our own ideas. As we find civilization, we will analyze the stories of the society and the people from which it comes and attempt to provide these stories as tools for other peoples to use in attempts to increase their civilization.

If civilization doesn’t provide the path to globalization, laws and law enforcement will. We worry that individuals will maintain a head-down, selfish view of humanity’s condition and leave the growth and future of people to the corporate and governmental forces that want to touch every person, but not in a way that empowers them or provides them with a voice.

We want to be a force guiding globalization toward civilization by studying civilization, discerning the causes and tools used to create it, and spreading these ideas around the world. We can do this in an adventurous, attention-grabbing, and ecologically sound way by sailing to communities on all the waters of the world. We have the right boat for the trip, but debt ties us to the United States. Roughly \$100,000 will pay off the debt and finish outfitting the boat. Further funds will provide a small living fund, to be used only when there is no work or when focused on writing. Another \$250,000-\$300,000 would provide for living expenses and upkeep on the boat for 15 years. A grant and sponsoring organization could also give us access to countries and people that otherwise might not welcome us by legitimizing our mission.

This project will almost immediately show results in the effects on people we can reach personally by sail and readers of our website and stories. We believe that more effects will show quickly, in people touched by the increased focus on civilization and more success for ethical global organizations. At the most hopeful and largest scale, we hope to have a civilizing effect on humanity as a whole over the course of our lives.

Objectives

We will sail slowly around the world using wind, solar, and human power as much as possible, engaging people in artistic exchanges using storytelling and images in order to create a better understanding of civilization and spark people to continue to think about, talk about, and work on recognizing and applying civilization on a global scale. We want to search out the cultural, legal, environmental, religious, ideological, and economic causes by learning the language, becoming part of the local workforce and earning entrance into local communities. We will focus on the working people of each geographical area we visit, finding socially responsible jobs and working along with them in order to better understand their contributions to global civilization.

We will need to create a communication primer that will allow us both to communicate basic ideas and to explore more esoteric ideas. Because most of our exchange will take place on the level of storytelling and conversation, our understanding of the insights available in language itself will be of utmost importance. We will rely on translators as little as possible and will always question them closely as to the reasons for the particular English language words they pick. We will have to work out what ideas most closely resemble the version of civilization we are seeking, rather than trusting to strict translations of the word, which could send us on useless tangents. To bolster our attempts and to make sure that we aren't completely relying on an imperfect grasp of the language, we also want to seek photography, art, and music that express these same ideas.

Once we have begun to see effects that seem civilized, we want to discuss them with the people we have become close to in the community. We will explore the idea of civilization with them using the examples we have seen as a departure point for the conversations. We hope to gain deep understanding of how the individuals in a culture view the actions we think of as civilized. Will they agree or will they have other examples that better explicate their view of civilization? We will encourage them to tell us stories of their experiences with civilization, and we hope to uncover enduring stories that are part of the cultural understanding of civilization.

In the end, we hope to have collections of stories, photographs, music and other art that deeply explore the question of civilization. We also expect that civilization itself will be an idea in the foreground of people's interactions rather than something they ignore or think of as distant and separate from their daily lives. We want to prepare the people of the world for the benefits of globalization by teaching them about each other's most civilized behaviors, and we believe that our work will lead to a beautifully various but more civilized world.

Procedures

We will sail to Hawaii and then to the islands of Oceania. Starting at Kiritimati (formerly known as Christmas Island), we will canvas the island chains of the South Seas.

On each island, we will assess the environment and society for possible learning. If there is promise of gaining any understanding, we will find the best place or places for our boat. Next, we will start talking to other boaters and local marine workers.

We will use the community networks that touch these workers to find either paying jobs or other work that needs to be done. Offering our services, we will request payment of various types. If possible, we will trade work for food and help in finding storytellers – or stories themselves. Again, when possible, we will ensure that our work does not upset what may or may not be a delicate economic balance. We need this partnership partly in order to avoid taking work from people who need it – if we can get grants, we won't need to trade our skills for money, which could reduce the financial pool for the local people.

Once we have started finding people willing and able to talk to us about civilization, we will ask questions and tell stories about both civilized and uncivilized situations. We will encourage reciprocal sharing of stories, images, and music either directly responding to or indirectly sparked by our questions and stories.

At the same time, we will attempt to make observations of social and individual examples of civilized behavior. We will follow up on these observations through further questions, hopefully eliciting new stories and finding more storytellers.

While learning and compiling these stories, we will study the area's history and current events. Looking for historical precedents, we will attempt to find the ground situation from which a particular practice or attitude grew. By studying the historical and current contexts, we hope to gain an understanding of how other cultures can benefit by or adopt the practices or attitudes explained in the stories.

Writing articles and stories is our next step. We will incorporate stories we learn and the research we do into narratives that we will submit to publications such as *Cruising World Magazine* and the *New Yorker Magazine*. We hope to introduce these questions and start similar discussions in even the locales to which we have not yet traveled.

Meanwhile, we will move on. Sailing to the next port, we will bring the stories we've learned to another place and start again the process of meeting people, working, and gathering together the scattered fragments of global civilization.

Evaluation

Because of the grand scale of the project, we will need to be evaluated on the steps we take as well as the effects we create. The specific project outcomes that a funder could expect to see include a regularly updated website, regularly released collections of stories, music, and art from around the world, art shows in local venues and on the web, and multiple books and multitudes of articles. Harder to demonstrate but the whole point of the enterprise, the world will gain individuals with a greater understanding of their creation of and responsibility for civilization. We are open to specific reporting requirements and welcome ideas for evaluating the success of this venture.

Future Funding

If we obtain funding at a level that allows us to begin the trip but does not support us in an on-going way, we will support ourselves with the jobs we get and the money we make on our writing. We could conceivably do our entire circumnavigation in this fashion. We hope to find funding that will trickle in over years (or that we can invest and use for years) so that the work we do in each place we visit can be flexible and even non-paid if necessary. For example, there is an organization building solar-powered medical clinics in the Kiribati Islands and we would love to be able to work on that project while we are there. Since a project like that has a limited number of paid employees, we would not be able to get work with them without taking positions from the locals who have been hired. On-going funding would allow us to do good work without always focusing on the income we derive from that work.

Credentials

Dena's Story

I have been itinerant all my life, moving as dictated by my father's employer, the United States Air Force. Wide experience, even within the relatively close cultural climate of the various regions of the United States, impressed upon me the importance of developing a broad perspective on communication and problem-solving. At the University of Washington in Seattle, I earned a Bachelor of Arts in English with a teaching emphasis. I decided to trade the opportunity to earn my teaching certificate for one that would allow me to gain real-life knowledge and act to change something in the world at the same time.

I accepted a job with a feminist sex toy company, Toys in Babeland. In this job, I enjoyed an opportunity to perform direct activism in partnership with our customers, changing the atmosphere of social repression that stymies people's physical lives. I also began to consider political activism more seriously but found most organizations too narrowly focused for my needs. As a woman with global and multicultural leanings, I was unsatisfied with devoting myself to specific, geographically limited changes or projects. I wanted deeper change. Also, how was I to work for change if I could not pinpoint which change would be beneficial and which would lead to intellectual and social blind alleys? My nonviolent participation in Seattle's protest of the World Trade Organization's meeting in 1999 served to shift me farther from the local, one-issue-at-a-time method of activism. Even such a large, successful gathering had only a certain amount of impact. I wanted to get to the roots of the problems and slowly developed the questions and ideas contained in this proposal.

I have been sailing since 1998, and I have become dedicated to this way of life. My love of sailing is only one part of the allure. I also love the possibilities inherent in a traveling method that allows me to maintain my dedication to ecologically sound living. I seldom use my boat's engine, I have a solar panel that provides me with electricity for light and other essentials, and I carry a bicycle so that I can get around on land.

James' Story

I hauled my first mainsail on a Hobie Cat when I was 9 years old and have been a sucker for this kind of incredibly expensive pain ever since. My very early childhood was spent as a Navy brat, roaming the eastern seaboard of the United States from Rhode Island to Key West. I spent the late 70's to mid 80's "scoring my chops" on a dozens of small boats that I sailed on

Lake Travis in Austin, Texas, with my friends. In 1985, I sailed from Corpus Christi, Texas, to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as first mate aboard Saul Sternberg's Bristol Herrishoff 63' wooden topsail Schooner the S.V. She-La – a boat that I grew into my teens helping to rebuild.

As my life long vocation, I have chosen the word photographer, and I have always been able to rely on photography to put food on the table. At 14 years old, I had my first paying job as the "Photographer" (with finger quotes and a self-conscious grin) at my sister's 1979 wedding using a borrowed Cannon AE-1. In 1987, working as an intern for a somewhat reputable "firm" called West Photography, I shot the Denny's menu on an Omni 4X5 large format camera. We shot well over 5,000 pictures in three weeks. From 1992 until 2002, the cover of David Miles Huber's best selling and yearly reissued book, Modern Recording Techniques, showed him at the mixing board in Seattle's "Bad Animals" recording studio, a photo I took on my Nikon F2-T, the most widely respected photojournalist's camera of its time. In 1999, I photographed sex toys for the Toys in Babeland on-line catalog in their Seattle store, using their clientele and co-workers as my "set directors." I used a CAMERA DETAILS HERE and, because of how quick, inexpensive, and compact photography had become, getting direct input from the store's customers and workers was made not only easy but a bunch of fun!

From 1985 to 1999, I shot on, with very few exceptions, Kodak T-Max 3200 speed, 35mm black and white film using my trusty Nikon F-2T with an MD-2 motor drive. I shot literally thousands of feet of film on that camera, until it died a dignified death at sea in the year of '02. By then, I was already making the move from film to digital. Almost overnight, my academic specialty and M.F.A specificity (manual 35mm, high speed black and white photography) had become all but obsolete – or better yet "Artistic and/or Obscure." Ultimately, it was the environmental concerns that inspired me to give up shooting on film. The dumping of toxic chemicals from my many darkrooms into our planet's water supply is something I no longer have to accept to make my visual impact on our species. Now I shoot primarily digital photography on my Nikon Cool-Pix 5700 or my silly little "shoe-phone-camera," and all of my processing is done with Adobe Photoshop 7 on my Sony Vaio.

Dena and I publish our work on our website, www.svsapien.net. I can now, on the sailing vessel Sapien, run my computer from our batteries, which are storing 12 volt direct current electricity that we absorbed from the sun. I can take all the pictures I want, build or pirate a Wi/Fi signal, and publish an entire book without one chemical entering our water supply or one piece of paper ending up in the trash, and I can sail to any port in the world to discover anything I wish to experience. So now, after 31 years of sailing and 26 years of exposing the world on an average of 1/250th of a second at a time, I have the means and the motivation of a 21st century adventurer who doesn't have to destroy anything to show my work to the world.