



THE ASCENT

Acknowledging and Rewarding Heroes of Hope

Imagine, Inc.

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as•cent (ə sent') *n.* 1. the act of rising or mounting upward 2. climb

THE CHALLENGE

TODAY, TWO OF THE MOST PRESSING QUESTIONS RELATIVE TO OUR PLANET'S SURVIVAL ARE:

- 1)** How can we improve our means of fostering the resolution of human conflict?
- 2)** How do we employ new thinking and new technologies that will reverse the prolonged, massive abuse to the environment that is currently threatening us with our own extinction?

INTRODUCTION

We recognize the importance of creating sources of renewed optimism. Our organization, Imagine, Inc., is working to establish a system of acknowledgment that each year supports visionary heroes worldwide whose environmental, peace, and humanitarian initiatives are restoring hope to the masses. We are committed to building and handing down an enduring institution, a legacy capable of empowering current and future generations.

"We are at a choice point:
we face either an age of
extinction or an age of
restoration."

—Nina Simon
Cofounder of Bioneers
opening remarks 2004 conference

CONCEPT

This proposal outlines a philanthropic awards program and global media event entitled *The Ascent*. It has been designed to bring people together for an annual celebration of the human spirit. *The Ascent* acknowledges and rewards the exemplary commitments of contemporary visionaries who have successfully improved the lives of ordinary people everywhere by means firmly rooted in the power of peace and environmental healing.

The Ascent will honor individuals of various ages, backgrounds, races, and religions who serve as guardians of our planet, responding to today's urgent need for conscious management of ourselves, our communities, and our environment. These great men and women courageously exemplify the immense positive potential of humankind.

■ Mission, Principles, and Objectives

The Ascent is conceived as a noncompetitive award for aspiration or achievement, a new world prize recognizing individuals and groups whose outstanding endeavors demonstrate superlative dedication to humanitarianism, peace, or environmental balance.

The awards program will also identify and acknowledge institutions that have been instrumental in focusing our attention on these issues. Amnesty International, the National Geographic Society, Greenpeace, the Smithsonian Institute, Seeds of Peace, and the Waldorf school system are examples of organizations that best convey the potential and intent of our prize program.

Each year, *The Ascent* will reach privileged and underprivileged alike via a global multimedia broadcast of its awards ceremony. This event will awaken in others, from executives on Madison Avenue to children in war-torn Iraq, a heightened sense of service to humanity.

The Ascent will honor world figures, superstars, activists, and unsung heroes whose legacy of planetary stewardship will ignite enthusiasm and motivate whole communities, especially their youth. Over the years, *The Ascent* will promote an ongoing stream of responsible and conscious advocates of constructive change who embody the virtues of forgiveness, courage, justice, philanthropy, ingenuity, goodwill, and compassion for all living things.

The uplifting, empowering message of *The Ascent* is both timeless and timely. It will help restore hope by revealing practical pathways to peace, declaring reverence for all living things, and proving that the power of even one person can bring about significant healing in the world.

■ Expansion

Within a few short years of *The Ascent's* commencement, the founders will begin to extend the prize to the corporate community. We will nominate commercial enterprises for their exceptional corporate conduct in such areas as concern for community, environmental responsibility, safe product lines, codes of ethics, and fair employment practices. We believe that the whole planet will benefit most by focusing attention first on positive changes occurring in industries most known for their irresponsible behavior.

■ Festival and Multimedia Broadcast

The awards program will consist of three major components:

1) A two- to three-day multicultural festival, featuring:

- Representative work of talented nominees
- Performances and exhibits in a variety of local venues

This multicultural festival concludes the awards adjudication period. During this festival, nominees preselected for their outstanding artistic talents will exhibit, perform, present, and lecture/demonstrate their accomplishments. Their presence in the host city's nightclubs, galleries, and other popular gathering places will allow the public to engage them in a global-village atmosphere. Highlights of nominee presentations and performances will be videotaped for later use in profile segments during the awards ceremony.

2) A two-hour live worldwide broadcast of the awards ceremony, to include:

- A megastar emcee anchor host supported by two cohosts
- Celebrity presentations of trophies and cash prizes to the winners
- Activists, superstars, and unsung heroes, from the nominee pool
- Compelling documentaries profiling nominee achievements

The Ascent's awards ceremony, reaching world audiences via a global multimedia broadcast, will be unique among existing world prizes. With its wealth of celebrity, the ceremony will harness essential elements of mass-media appeal. Inherent in each year's roster of nominees is the world renown of many artists, athletes, scientists, explorers, and the like. Theirs is the precise stage upon which *The Ascent* will highlight its less-sung nominees. When augmented by a brilliant and charismatic master of ceremonies, this celebrity lineup will command and sustain a worldwide audience year after year.

Upon reaching its maturity and full acclaim, our prize will occupy a cultural platform that currently stands vacant. We envision an awards ceremony that blends the prestige and import of the Nobel and Goldman prizes with the entertainment and commercial value of the Oscar and Grammy awards.

The broadcast will be further enhanced by live performances featuring the top names in music, by candid insights from award recipients, and by minidocumentaries profiling the exemplary contributions of nominees and *Ascent* laureates.

- 3) A Grand Finale Gala, broadcast from the host city's finest ballroom, terrace, museum, or castle. The broadcast will include:
- Behind-the-scenes footage of *The Ascent's* "who's who"
 - Interviews with attendees and participants taped during the multi-cultural festival

The Grand Finale Gala will immediately follow the awards ceremony broadcast. During this lavish after-party, guests will enjoy a more relaxed atmosphere, where off-the-cuff comments will add color and spontaneity to the broadcast segment.

■ Awards and Monetary Prizes

Imagine recommends that each **living** *Ascent* recipient (conceivably up to 15 individuals or groups per annum) be awarded a monetary prize in an amount ranging from US\$1.5 to 2 million to support and help sustain their work and commitment. Recipients must be present in the host city in order to receive their awards and monetary prizes.

The presentation of individual cashier's checks will provide important and meaningful content to the awards ceremony. The cash incentive will help to encourage attendance of even the most private and reclusive individuals.

Imagine will extend its award eligibility to include posthumous nominations of individuals deceased after 1945. Their contributions will be enshrined as a poignant memoir, preserved in footage that will enrich the live broadcasts, as well as *The Ascent's* archive.

■ Commission for Planetary Stewardship

The Commission for Planetary Stewardship (CPS) is the committee of individuals charged with the annual nominating and judging of awards. A total of 144 people (plus alternates) from the world community will be

invited to serve as judges on the Commission. In contrast to the exclusivity and secrecy of some world prizes, Imagine's philosophy will employ and emphasize diversity and openness in the selection of commissioners. The body of commissioners could potentially include athletes and astronauts, corporate figures and chefs, masons and musicians, lawyers and loggers, superstars and scholars, veterans and veterinarians...in other words, virtually anyone.

Early in the development process, two teams of commissioners and volunteers will meet in think-tank fashion to establish crucial nomination and adjudication criteria. Together they will research and define the award's essential guidelines and standards, the very ideals commissioners themselves will later apply. International House at the University of California at Berkeley has already expressed its sincere interest in providing volunteers to assist in this process.

Imagine embraces the energy and brilliance of young people and considers their involvement integral. We proudly invite young women and men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five to serve together with more senior commissioners. This experience will enrich the lives of these youth as they share their ideas and service with mentors.

Imagine invites our young adults to participate at every level of the awards process, including:

- Serving Imagine both on its governing and advisory boards
- Nominating candidates and participating in the adjudication
- Assisting in the formatting of nominee and award recipient selection criteria
- When applicable, qualifying for award candidacy

■ Nominees

Ascent nominees are living proof that nonviolence is not a sign of weakness but one of tremendous inner strength and courage. We will distinguish and honor our *Ascent* nominees as "Heroes of Hope." In his or her own way, each hero is defining new criteria of peace, cooperation, and environmental integrity for the benefit of all living beings.

When people dare to do great things, they are bound to attract critics and controversy. *The Ascent* does not dwell on the detractive aspects of these individuals, nor does it take a myopic view of them. Although they are human and thus imperfect, they have done their best to follow their inner callings, to live their values, and to make extraordinary contributions to the world.

Listed below are but a few examples of individuals and groups whose initiatives are of the caliber that will characterize each year's roster of nominees. These distinguished people, diverse in nationality, age, talent, and stewardship, embody the very spirit of *The Ascent* awards program.

KARL HEINZ BÖHM (Austria)

actor, humanitarian

Has educated the famine-ravaged peoples of Ethiopia on the importance of using sustainable irrigation, farming, and agriculture techniques.

DIKEMBE MUTOMBO (Congo)

basketball player, humanitarian

Raises funds worldwide and donates his pro-basketball earnings for the building of a 300-bed hospital.

SABRIYE TENBERKEN (Germany)

visionary, humanitarian

Sightless since 12, she created a Braille system for the complex Tibetan language, founded the international organization Braille without Borders, and continues to educate and empower the sightless.

MARY PETERS (Great Britain)

Olympic distance runner, peace builder

Risked life and limb, leading protests against the installation of nuclear missiles on European soil.

PAUL RUSESABAGINA (Rwanda)

hotel manager, peace builder

During Rwanda's 1994 massacre of Tutsis, Paul Rusesabagina converted his 4-star hotel into an impromptu refugee camp, fiercely defending the lives of his 1,000 guests, including whites, blacks, Tutsis, and his own family, against a continuing onslaught of murderous Hutus.

STEVIE WONDER (USA)

composer, humanitarian

Worked tirelessly to help install Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday as a national holiday to immortalize the civil rights leader.

GREG SMITH (USA)

student, peace builder

This 13-year-old college senior with an unmeasured IQ has already opened a peace school in a Kenyan village and is spearheading an effort to restore a system of libraries to war-ravaged Rwanda.

JULIA BUTTERFLY HILL (USA)

poet, environmentalist

For 2 ½ years, she lived at treetop level sixty meters above the ground to protest the felling of the world's few remaining ancient redwoods.

* STANLEY "TOOKIE" WILLIAMS (USA)

writer, peace builder

This death-row inmate was nominated five times for the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize for several books, authored from prison, which empowered positive leadership roles among gangs worldwide.

* IQBAL MASIH (Pakistan)

tapestry artist, humanitarian

Kidnapped and forced into slave labor when just four years old, this exceptional activist was assassinated at age twelve for bringing world media attention to the abusive child-labor practices of his country's infamous hand-woven rug trade.

MARY THERESE WINIFRED ROBINSON (Ireland)

peace builder, humanitarian

This seventh and first female president of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights now serves as chancellor of the University of Dublin and a professor at Columbia University. Her current Ethical Globalization Initiative fosters human rights, gender equality and enhanced corporate accountability. She is also one of the European members of the Trilateral Commission.

KUJTESA BEJTULLAHU (Kosovo)

journalist, humanitarian

From a hiding place in Kosovo, this 16-year-old Albanian risked capture, rape, and certain death as she corresponded, via e-mail, with her Berkeley (Calif.) High School pen pal, Finnegan Hamill. In so doing, she kept CNN and the world informed of the daily Serbian aggression inflicted on her people.

JOAN BAEZ (USA)

singer, humanitarian

Toured the world's war-torn regions and through music and message, she inspired compassion and nonviolence.

MAYA ANGELOU (USA)

poet, humanitarian

Her writing deepens our awareness and understanding of the effects of racial tension.

SYLVIA EARLE (USA)

oceanographer, environmentalist

Renowned as "Her Deepness," this botanist, who explored the sea floor untethered at a depth of 1,250 feet for two and a half hours (deeper than any human being has descended before or since) urges humanity's greater understanding and preservation of sea life and species.

HELEN CALDICOTT (Australia)

writer, environmentalist

Lectures globally on the crisis of the planet's unstored nuclear waste and the urgency of nuclear disarmament.

RUBIN "HURRICANE" CARTER (USA)

boxer, humanitarian

Released from prison after serving twenty years for a crime he did not commit, his nonprofit organization currently seeks to help free other individuals who have been unjustly incarcerated.

* BOB MARLEY (Jamaica)

composer, peace builder

Single-handedly inspired the genre of music known the world over as reggae, with lyrics advancing awareness, unity, and freedom.

IRIS BERBEN (Germany)

actress, educator, peace builder

This well-loved German film star has sustained a three-decade parallel career facilitating German-Jewish understanding and speaking out publicly against anti-Semitism and all forms of racism.

WHOOPI GOLDBERG (USA)

comedian, humanitarian

Generates funds for and raises public awareness of the plight of homeless people in America.

VANDANNA SHIVA (India)

physicist, environmentalist

Renowned lecturer who promotes indigenous peoples' rights. She also speaks in opposition to the current threat to the world's food supply by corporate and state-sponsored genetic manipulation of agriculture.

* KENNETH SARO-WIWA (Nigeria)

journalist, environmentalist

Was the target of an assassination campaign directed by a major petroleum company for exposing its acts of regional environmental degradation.

DAVID BLUME (USA)

environmentalist, humanitarian

His regenerative integrated farm model incorporates permaculture principles to produce both food and alcohol fuel (as liquid solar energy). This elegant solution significantly solves a number of our planet's most pressing problems, including Peak Oil, hunger, poverty, pollution, waste management, climate change, and ocean and soil reclamation. Further, it creates nonexportable jobs wherever implemented.

* CHIUNE SEMPO SUGIHARA (Japan)

diplomat, humanitarian

This Japanese consul to Lithuania (1939–1940) saved thousands of Jews from the Nazis by writing visas in stark defiance of his government's orders, thereby allowing refugees to escape to Japan. He was later interned in Soviet detention camps and upon his return was shunned by his own postwar government.

* PAUL NEWMAN (USA)

actor, humanitarian

His private food enterprise generates \$80+ million per year, which is donated exclusively to charity.

HARRY BELAFONTE (USA)

entertainer, peace builder

With his behind-the-scenes diplomacy, he has helped to free up deadlocked negotiations concerning some of the world's most pressing social problems, including the fall of apartheid in 1994.

MARSHALL ROSENBERG (USA)

peace builder

Emerging from work during the Civil Rights era, he founded the international Center for Nonviolent Communication, which serves to peacefully resolve even the most intractable differences among communities.

JEFFREY WIGAND (USA)

scientist, humanitarian

Top industry scientist turned whistle-blower, this activist brought big tobacco to its knees by informing the world media of its predatory methods and practices. Today, he continues to lecture young people on the perils of smoking.

* DENNIS BRUTUS (South Africa)

poet, humanitarian

Not only does Encyclopedia Britannica cite him as one of the world's great living poets, but in 1976, his activist effort singlehandedly caused the International Olympic Committee to commence the banning of the participation of all South African athletes until apartheid fell.

* *posthumous nominees*

FUNDING

As conceived, *The Ascent* can be compared to the Oscars, the Grammys, and the Super Bowl in its scope, viewership, global entertainment value, and income potential as a live-broadcast event. In addition to the revenue streams listed below, *The Ascent's* primary sources of income will be generated by an assortment of sponsorship and advertising opportunities over the event period.

We are presently seeking a strategic partnership with a globally positioned media and entertainment company, one capable of undertaking the development, production, and broadcast of *The Ascent*. Additional prospective partners may include a city or country, a major university or cultural institution, a corporation, or an individual. To ensure the annual success of the live awards-ceremony telecast, Imagine is exploring a number of options to help secure the appropriate world figure capable of commanding center stage as *The Ascent's* anchor host. Producers will recognize the program's potential for sponsorship, as it offers nonviolent, reality-based, star-studded entertainment with important and meaningful messages.

Imagine, Inc. estimates US\$2.5 million in start-up capital will be required, in addition to the more than US\$320,000 in resources, time commitment, and in-kind services already contributed over the past nineteen years. Imagine has budgeted the start-up capital to include such items as:

- Corporate ID and logo design for both *The Ascent* and Imagine, Inc.
- Design of the award (trophy, plaque, ring, ribbon, emblem, or the like)
- Recording of *The Ascent's* signature music
- Preproduction for recording of live music compilation (optional)

- Signature artist posters and commemorative postal stamp series
- Assembly and training of the Commission for Planetary Stewardship (jury)
- Legal services for sharing of trademarks and service marks
- Festival design
- Coffee-table-style book featuring the “who’s who” of *The Ascent*

Typically, host-city partnerships make available to organizers of world events a variety of in-kind benefits, such as security, access to local venues, event marketing and advertising, transportation for participants, and insurance. As presently conceived, beginning with *The Ascent’s* commencement, the prize will rotate annually between three countries, namely Germany, South Africa, and the United States. As an alternative, it could tour a different international venue each year, employing a bid-city process. This option would generate substantial additional revenue.

Optimally, a philanthropic endowment could sustain the program’s funding in perpetuity. Each year, a portion of *The Ascent’s* after-production profits will be directed toward either the establishment or maintenance of this endowment. The remaining funds will be distributed to charities selected by the founders.

■ Income

Imagine, Inc. and its nonprofit partners will control *The Ascent’s* world trademarks and service marks, and therefore its licensing. Ancillary income opportunities include:

Documentary films and videos—aftermarket distribution and sales of three video/DVD products: 1) *The Ascent* awards ceremony video; 2) raw footage of Imagine’s filmed documentaries of each nominee’s journey; 3) a compilation of minidocumentaries highlighting each Hero of Hope, as aired during *The Ascent* broadcast.

Online gallery of Planet Art—featuring posters and commemorative postal stamps for sale via the Internet worldwide.

Festivals—sponsorship, ticket sales, exhibitor space rental, and a percentage of exhibitor revenues.

Concerts—sponsorship, ticket sales, and a percentage of on-site sales of guest performers’ music and other products.

Ascent music products—audio and video compilations of festival concerts and awards-ceremony music performances.

Radio broadcasts—sponsorship and advertising from international radio simulcasts of the awards ceremonies.

Internet—pre-event sponsorship and advertising; potential sponsorship of Internet simulcasts uncertain, depending upon technological advances and market receptivity at the date of broadcast.

Publishing—royalties from theme music (*The Ascent’s* anthem); distribution and sale of a coffee-table-style pictorial essay featuring *The Ascent’s* Heroes of Hope, produced by hand-picked photographers and writers; and the founder’s forthcoming autobiography, *With Holes in My Socks*.

Merchandising—sale of a plethora of promotional items and memorabilia, ranging from calendars to clothing, from jewelry to alternative-fuel automobiles.

■ Income to Host City

We predict that a number of the world’s great cities will embrace Imagine’s awards concept, as it offers great potential to enhance a city’s image. Rich with world figures and celebrity, *The Ascent* will afford each year’s host city global media coverage, worldwide marketing, and increased tourism during the event period. Further, the cultural festival, with its concerts and exhibits, as well as *The Ascent’s* gala afterparty, will increase citywide revenues to hotels, restaurants, clubs, transportation services, theaters, and so forth. We are honored that the city of Berlin, Germany has already expressed interest in partnering with Imagine and hosting *The Ascent’s* inaugural event.

ADMINISTRATION

Incorporated in 1988, Imagine, Inc. is a California-based nonprofit corporation for charity and education, holding a 501(c)(3) status (federal tax ID #68-0121817).

Imagine is currently the exclusive administrative authority of *The Ascent* program. Its governing board of directors will remain the decision-making body until either an underwriter commits to the project or an individual or institution establishes a philanthropic endowment.

Serving the governing board are Imagine’s officers, Mr. Carter C.C. Collins, President; Ms. Kris Knight, Secretary; and Ms. Karen Everhart, Treasurer. The governing board will increase with the coming installation of up to four new members.

■ Mission

IMAGINE, INC. IS BUILDING THE PRACTICAL MEANS THROUGH WHICH MENTORS AND LEADERS INSPIRE AND EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE EVERYWHERE.

■ Advisors

The following distinguished individuals have agreed to serve on *The Ascent* awards program's international honorary advisory committee:

- **Peter Coyote**—actor, environmentalist
- **David Rubinson**—record and film producer, humanitarian
- **Richie Havens**—musician/vocalist of Woodstock fame, activist
- **Randy Hayes**—founder of Rainforest Action Network, activist
- **Avon Mattison**—founder of Pathways to Peace, peace builder
- **Peter Russell**—philosopher, author, activist
- **Joseph Shabalala**—lead vocalist for Ladysmith Black Mambazo, humanitarian
- **Curly Bear Wagner**—Native American historian, activist
- **Marilyn King**—Olympian, humanitarian

"Activists, peace builders, environmentalists, humanitarians, stewards, agents for change, mentors—these Heroes of Hope are strewn about the planet, yet aligned as a round of spokes, united for the whole cause."

—C. Collins
Founder, The Ascent

ENDORSEMENTS

"The Ascent is an idea whose time has come. It will amplify voices needed to unite and uplift the human spirit across the world."

—**Dr. James P. Breeden, PhD, former dean, William Jewett Tucker Foundation, Dartmouth College; future member, Imagine, Inc. governing board**

"Just as John Lennon's song 'Imagine' has captured the hearts and awakened the vision of tens of millions of people, your awards...will assist in dispelling the artificial boundaries of the mind that have separated people throughout the ages."

—**Carolyn Anderson, Executive Director, Global Family**

"The vision of the awards program will bring environmental and social justice issues to the forefront of global consciousness at its most critical point...To honor those activists who have contributed through their work to the rethinking of the relationship of humans to one another and to the planet...has the potential to change the tide of global events."

—**Randall Hayes, Founder and Executive Director, Rainforest Action Network**

"I am pleased that you link social justice with environmental justice...My reading of your excellent awards program suggests to me that we can manifest the 'inescapable network of mutuality,' so aptly identified by the venerable Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."

—**Dr. Paul Clark, PhD, FRGS, Chairman, The Mandate for Life on Earth; President, New World's Eve Foundation; member, The Ascent advisory committee**

"I can think of no finer endeavor than The Ascent for Africa Environment 2000 to promote, endorse, and contribute to..."

—**Clare Munn, Cofounder, Africa Environment 2000; member, The Ascent advisory committee**

"We share a similar stream of thoughts flowing toward the ocean of world peace...I am firmly determined to row a boat with you to materialize your ambitious attempt as equal children of this mother planet."

—**Akio Inoue, President, Tenri Yamato Congress, Japan; member, The Ascent advisory committee**

"Musicians, film makers, architects, novelists, dancers, and others have played vital roles in promoting peace and preserving nature...The Ascent will honor these people who change our perception of the world and stir us to improve our collective way of life."

—**Dr. Stephen F. Stringham, PhD, Environmental Scientist, Blackfoot Reservation; member, The Ascent advisory committee**

"The East West Group looks forward to contributing to this important project by enlisting our network of contacts around the world...in organizing and managing the awards process."

—**Dean Engel, Managing Partner, The East West Group, Inc.**