



## Paradise on Earth

### An interview with Robert Muller, Part 1

Conducted by Douglas Gillies

**Editor's Note:** Robert Muller, who won the Academy's 2005 Humanitarian Award at Global MindChange Forum, turned 84 on March 10 and celebrated the occasion both by jotting down his 7,000th idea "for a better world" and also by participating in a Q&A interview with participants from around the world over the Internet. This article is an edited transcript of that interview, conducted with his biographer Douglas Gillies.



In a world characterized by ever-shorter time spans and intense attention on the present, Muller's perspective as an elder seems indescribably valuable. He does not despair about the human condition, because he, his parents and grandparents lived collectively through six Franco-Germanic wars. He now views a relatively placid European Union and knows anything is possible within time.

He grew up in Alsace-Lorraine and survived World War II as a member of the French Resistance, once captured by the Gestapo. The multiple wars between Germany and France waged over the identity of the region inspired his life's work.

In 1948 he entered and won an essay contest on how to govern the world, the prize of which was an internship at the newly created United Nations. He devoted the next 40 years of his life behind the scenes at the United Nations focusing his energies on world peace.

He rose through the ranks at the UN to the official position of Assistant Secretary-General, reporting successively to Dag Hammarskjöld, U Thant, and Kurt Waldheim. From his vantage point of a top level global statesman he has seen a strong connection between spirituality and the political/cultural scene.

Robert Muller created a "World Core Curriculum" and is known throughout the world as the "father of global education." There are 29 [Robert Muller schools](#) around the world with more being established each year. The World Core Curriculum earned him the UNESCO Peace Education Prize in 1989.

Based on this curriculum and his devotion to good causes, Dr. Muller has recently drawn up a “Framework for World Media Coverage” as a public service, as well as a “Framework for Planetary and Cosmic Consciousness” and a “Framework for the Arts and Culture.”

Now in active “retirement,” Dr. Muller is Chancellor of the University for Peace created by the United Nations in demilitarized Costa Rica. He is in great demand to make speeches to educational, environmental, spiritual and political conferences around the world. Dr. Muller concentrates his efforts on promoting greater human understanding and global awareness. He was recently the recipient of the Albert Schweitzer International Prize for the Humanities and the Eleanor Roosevelt Man of Vision Award.

Dr. Muller lives most of the year at his small farm overlooking the University for Peace, on a sacred indigenous hill, Mt. Rasur, from which according to indigenous prophecy, a civilization of peace will extend to the entire world. His traditional Costa Rican house is located just up the hill from the Peace Monument of the University. In addition to his duties at the University, he devotes time to his writings and is an internationally acclaimed, multi-lingual speaker and author of fourteen books published in various languages. He has published his Testament to the UN as well as his plans and dreams for a peaceful, happy world.

**Douglas Gillies:** I met Robert Muller in 1994 when I was producing a conference in Santa Barbara and he was one of the 60 people who attended. It was called the “Big Picture Summit” and we were asking ourselves how we could speed up the shift to holistic thinking. One of the strategies was described by one of the other participants, Barbara Kahn, as follows: “What if we were to write one idea per day for a better world? By the year 2000, we would have 2,000 ideas.” The others just sat there in their chairs. I think the idea of writing 2,000 ideas was just a little bit intimidating. Robert stood up and he said, “I will do it.” And then he started writing his ideas. By the year 2000, he had 2,000 ideas for a better world. Now we are in 2007 and Robert has completed 7,000 ideas for a better world. So, for the people who have asked in their questions, “What can one person do?” — this is one answer. You can write down your ideas for a better world. If you keep at it, you might end up with 7,000 ideas as Robert has.

I was writing Robert’s biography [\*Prophet — The Hatmaker’s Son: The Life of Robert Muller\*](#) and studying his writings at the same time when I began to see a pattern in his ideas. Ultimately, the most important idea that Robert was describing is that we are living in a paradise — the most magnificent paradise in the universe. We need to recognize that and act accordingly, rather than continuing to struggle in some sort of a huge fight for our lives. I took some of those ideas and trimmed them into a kind of condensed version of Paradise Earth. Incidentally, you can get a copy of that on the web. Just go to [www.paradiseearthlings.com](http://www.paradiseearthlings.com) and there is a transcript available to print.

The idea of Paradise Earth continues to grow. And so here we are now, today, one day before Robert's 84th birthday. We are about to hear from Robert about Paradise Earth. This is the culmination of Robert's life's work. Thank you for sending your questions.

Robert, why don't we begin by asking you this question: what do you mean by Paradise Earth?

**Robert:** I consider the fact I am living in this paradise as being something incredible! (*Chuckles.*) I can live a good number of years, I can see birds. I can see the beauty all around me — other human beings are getting married, having children. So for me, right from the beginning, I loved all this. It was something incredible! And still, today at the age of 84, I have the same attitude. I wake up in the morning and it is a great moment to see nature again. I go out and I look at the plants... and this has been so deep in myself that I never had to find out why it was so. It just was so.

**Douglas:** Were you always this optimistic, or do you sometimes get discouraged?

**Robert:** I get so towards the evening, because I am very high up in the morning, and then progressively during the day, especially in a place like the United Nations where I have worked for 40 years, you have problems, and you have discouragements, and you have reports that this does not work, or that a new problem has arisen in such a country. And so at the end of the day, you are a little different. I find I am somewhat pessimistic at the end of the day because there were so many things which were wrong. But I didn't mind it. I just have my dinner, my talks with my children, because I know that the following morning all this will have gone. In the morning I would be again, as I was always before, the happiest man on the earth. (*Laughs.*)

**Douglas:** That has been my experience of you, not that you have your head in the clouds. You see the real problems in the world. You regenerate yourself and you approach each day as a new miracle. Have you been able to teach other people how to do this in their lives?

**Robert:** Oh yes. I am asked very often, and even in the United Nations, I have become a kind of model of it because it came to the point that when something was very wrong, or people in the United Nations were very desperate, they said, "Look, I do not know how to handle this." And then the Secretary-General always said, "Okay, talk to Robert Muller." (*Chuckles.*) So I could not get a better image of how people turned it to me. I was always able to set them out of their despair and so to make them happy again. One of them said, "Look, do not imagine that you can solve this problem in a short period of time. These are things which have accumulated over a long time, and it will take a long time to resolve them. So, do it systematically. Do it with hope, but do not despair if it is not done immediately."

I have known Secretaries-General who had great ideas, and they died without the ideas being adopted. But they knew that in a few more years,

someone would come out and it would become a reality. And this I have lived now practically during my entire career as a United Nations officer.

Even my becoming a United Nations man was due to the fact that I believed that someday I would be in a position where I could do something that would be addressed to the entire world! Out of the blue, in a town lost in France, in a very poor family, I was asked to join the United Nations. And I have spent all my life there. After my life, I will still continue to do what I have always done even if I am not a member of the United Nations. (Laughs.)

**Douglas:** Your experience at the United Nations gave you a sense of history that most of us can only dream of. Now we are speaking about Paradise Earth. Could you tell us, from an historical perspective, do you see any likelihood that we can achieve Paradise Earth based on your experience of history?

**Robert:** Oh, definitely! There is no doubt about that! I have seen other things become a reality, about which I have been told "It-cannot-become-a-reality". For example, at the beginning of the United Nations I was told that I could not use the word "peace." I said, "What!? I cannot use the word 'peace'?" "No. Because there will be no peace on earth. There will always be something remaining and in the United Nations we have been told by governments that we can speak about the progress toward peacemaking, or something of the sort, but to consider that peace would be the normal situation of all humanity, of all the countries — they do not want to hear it."

After a couple of years, everything changed. Now peace is a word that is used everywhere, and in the United Nations it is absolutely on the top. If you are dealing with a better world, there is one thing which you should not count on: namely that what you do here, what you would like to happen, would happen during your life. Some things would take longer than that. But this is not a reason for not continuing to advocate what you believe, and to bring it newly forward to reality.

I remember Robert Shuman, for example, whom we induced to create a united Europe. Why, in Europe there were wars between all these countries. My grandparents lived through three wars between France and Germany. My father lived two. And I lived through one. Shuman made a declaration. He was a minister of the French government [*Editor's Note: Shuman was Prime Minister of France and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs*]. He made a declaration that all European countries will destroy their borders and will live together.

And they did! There was no comment about it. Later on, some of them regretted it, but we got a united Europe. And it was completely done at a time when Robert Shuman had just died (1963).

I went to his tomb to tell him that there was now a total acceptance of the European Union. And today it is the case! The border which I saw from my window in my town, and hated, and I asked, "Why do the birds go there?"

Why do the animals go there? Why can I not go as a human, without having a paper to fill out, etc., etc.?" — this border has disappeared and nobody complains about its disappearance.

**Douglas:** So there has been, in the past, unimaginable progress toward uniting the earth. Yet, now what we are looking at is the possibility that humans could adapt to the idea that earth is a paradise. What would be the next steps that we would have to take in order to move from this world — that is now in so much struggle — to a world that can unfold as a paradise?

**Robert:** Well, I would not jump immediately to that one as the main objective. I would consider the main objective to be to continue to create friendships, and even continue the destruction of borders, or reducing the border formalities, in many places around the world.

We should not say that this is done. It is not yet done. And there still are many places that will require it. That would be my priority one. And the priority number two, I would just launch as "We are a paradise in the universe!" I would say look, we are the only one, because we have seven other places which are born from the Sun, and the conditions are not created to have a human species.

You know that, for a species or for a life to be created on any planet in the universe, there are so many conditions to fulfill. The distance [from the Sun], all kinds of things. It is the longest, non-productive list of conditions which are needed for the birth of life in the universe. And so far we, on Planet Earth, are the only ones that have life. Because all the conditions of the right distance from the Sun, of the right heat of the earth, of the composition of the waters of the earth, we are the only ones who have it, and therefore we are the only ones that have been found in the whole universe in which life exists.

The rest of the world does not believe this and does not admit that, really, the European Union is a model. Even inside the EU there are quite a number of people who do not like it! They say, "Whoa! I am more important than all the other big things in France. Our cathedral is the thing. And Alsace-Lorraine should be the area that should develop and not the whole French system which is so complicated."

It is something which is difficult. It is not ready yet. But it is growing each year, almost every month. We must continue to do it. And that is what I do, and I do not place the condition that other people should do it too. I have to do it myself. Other people then imitate it.

How many people write me letters and say, "Mr. Muller, do you think that I should have this as a proposal to the United Nations?" And I say, "Yes, read it to me," and I say, "Maybe you can change this a little bit. Please send it to the Secretary-General of the U.N. Do not expect an answer, because very often that goes to officials to work on and so very often they do not answer you."

It is my situation. I write to the Secretary-General and from the beginning I said to him, "You never need to answer me. The only thing that is expected of you is for you to implement it. And if you cannot implement it now, let it be implemented by your successor."

**Douglas:** So you don't depend upon the recipients of your letters to write back and acknowledge and tell you what they are going to do. You simply send them the idea and trust it will take seed somewhere.

**Robert:** Even to the extent when the president of a country comes up with a certain idea, is the author of an idea, not to have to say that this is an idea that was received from Mr. Muller. No! I think it would not have the same strength if it is an idea which comes from someone else. I tell them this must be *your* idea. You do not have to mention my name in any perspective. And then there is a better chance that the rest of the world is going to listen to him.

**Douglas:** So one of the secrets of being so prolific in generating ideas, is that you give them away freely. You don't try to hang onto them and make them Robert Muller's ideas. You simply send them out so that others can implement them.

**Robert:** Yes, that is exactly it. And to do it once in a while when you see that there is a group of people somewhere, who try to do something better for the world, and very often they write to me. They say, "Mr. Muller, we heard that you have very good ideas for preparing a new world. Could you tell us what we should do as the following countries..." Or very often they say, "Our idea is that we might do the following. How do you feel about it? Do you have other ideas?" I answer them and I often say to them, "You don't have to answer me." The most important thing is to implement it, to get it into circulation. I do not have a whole file of people who wrote to me. They do not have to write to me. What is important for them to be the authors of a new idea and to get the credit for it.

**Douglas:** One of the concerns that I noticed in the questions that have been coming in about Paradise Earth concerns the diversity, languages, the many different indigenous cultures that still inhabit the earth. How do you see that they will either be challenged or somehow otherwise helped as we move toward a Paradise Earth? Will they lose their languages, for example? Will they have to give up their traditions?

**Robert:** Two things... regarding loss of language. You should not even mention it. It has been proved that you have a united Europe, where people know each other, work together in all kinds of things, they get married across the border, all this exists. But the Germans continue to speak their German. The French, French. There is no problem to it.

But, progressively, they are beginning to learn about the other languages, too. This was totally prohibited, I remember, when I was a young child. You could not use any word that was not a French word. When the Germans occupied us, they said, "We do not want to hear another French word in

this school! Everything has to be German." This has already disappeared. So, do not make it a condition.

It was very difficult over the ages to go from the very beginnings of languages and gods in various places on the earth, and the whole continent that came up only two hundred years ago. You cannot ask all these people overnight to unite. All you can say is, work together. Try to do things together. Learn from each other, because you might learn something of which you have not thought in your country.

It's a difficult affair, because these languages are deep. They are very good, they are used by thousands and tens of thousands of people, sometimes, and you cannot ask them to destroy this and replace it with something else. It will not work. We will have a number of years when we have to consider this to be untouchable.

And progressively, one day, they say we might have in the United States some other languages in certain regions where they would be like to be closer to the Spanish, for example. Well, if they want to learn more Spanish and get in touch with the Spaniards on the other side, in Mexico, go ahead. Why be against it? It's not going to be something very fundamental.

We have the problem on Planet Earth that to get from the time of the creation of animals... this has been such an extraordinary time going on, it is a wonder that we even begin to talk about it.

You can do something in a family, in a village, in your work, but when it comes to the total humanity, we have not yet even tried to consider this as our home. To keep our ideas and our languages, but to work together — this has not yet begun.

But with the United Nations we have the first example that it should be done, and that it can be done. So many years will pass until we have a united world, like a united Europe. It would come, but it is not yet ready.

**Douglas:** That's interesting because you are pointing out something that had not really occurred to me. We are not really approaching each other, various cultures, with curiosity. We are not yet saying "Let me learn from you and I will teach you what I have to teach." We are not yet at the place where we are approaching each other with respect and curiosity. What about the places that are in so much turmoil, for example, there is the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. If people are intent on creating a Paradise Earth, what do they say to the people who are suffering in war?

**Robert:** There is something to add to the preceding, which we will discuss. It is the fact that you have even a strange reality that there are languages that are written in a way which is totally unknown in the rest of the world. Look at the Japanese writing. Look at the Chinese writing. This is not the alphabet which so many other countries follow. This is a local invention which took place and which continues today, so that to get all these people to work together with such tremendous differences,

and some of them are black and others are white and so on — there are so many differences — that to make this a united world is not so easy.

Now regarding the other question, you have proclaimed nations which are composed of so many enemies of each other that they are very difficult to bring into the line. And one of them, Iraq, is definitely an example because you have so many, many deep differences between them that it is difficult to get them to that point.

Remember that with the UN Secretary-General we visited China and at one point the Secretary-General asked Mao Tse Tung, "What do you think about the Middle East in the future of the world?" And he looked at that and he said, "I would never touch it. You will have the same Middle East a hundred years from now!" And Mao has been right already for 20 or 30 years since. He said this is so complicated that "I am not going to mix it up or try to do anything for this particular country."

Many countries around the world consider that the Middle East, and Iraq in particular, is the most difficult problem which we have as we think about a union of the world. We are not ready, and they will have to fight it out and try all kinds of things. But one day they will wake up, especially the children. When they are educated in foreign countries they will say, "Look, for heaven's sake, why do we continue that way? This is not the normal way of doing it." It will happen at one point, but it is not yet the case.

**Douglas:** Part of the solution is not to build walls to keep each other out, but to try to encourage people to travel back and forth so that they get to know each other.

**Robert:** Yes, and I think the realities are even ahead of you. (*Laughs.*) You have so many marriages between different countries. A few weeks ago I was talking to a lady here outdoors and I said to her, "How are the children doing?" and so on. She said, "My children! I don't see them anymore. My two boys have married girls who are far away on the other side of the earth. But they are happy so that's OK with me."

Can you imagine! It is interesting that no one so far has even come up with statistics of the number of marriages between nations. It would be very interesting to see this, and it will be good to have some statistics every year in order to see that this is something which is growing very much.

Even in my own family — I have a grandson who says, "Oh, Dad, I am not interested in this. I am interested in working in Africa." Or another says he is going to work in Latin America. Out of the air! But as human beings, they are fundamentally interested in knowing another part of the world. This is growing.

This is wonderful. We can create finally, a united Europe. My, my, my! (*Laughs.*)

**Douglas:** I am hearing that one of the elements leading to Paradise Earth is the natural curiosity of human beings as they go out and travel and

move to new places and form relationships with people who are different from themselves. I think what you are saying is that it is inherent in our human nature that we will continue to create a healthier and happier world. Is that right?

**Robert:** I have this passion that is a consequence of the fact that when the animal world was created, as we know it, thousands of years ago, there was one animal, namely the human animal, who did not have an occasion to do something special. Like the cows, like the other animals. And they went around, forlorn in various places. And wherever they went they said "Oh, that's a very nice thing. Let's have a little village here." And then they settled down and they had to have a language and they had to have a religion.

And the result is that, as humans, we have created so many very different things. And we lived in such a relationship. And sometimes, very often, we have wars, by neighbors and between neighbors. Or on a worldwide level in this century.

This has now come to the end where we say it cannot continue that way. We have to understand that we have all these languages, that we have all these gods, and religions, and why don't we all work together?

I am very glad that the religions are the most difficult to get together, to work together, because their religion is 100% the right one, and they cannot even have any talks with other religions.

But I have been able to create a united religions organization in San Francisco, I believe, which exists as the beginning of getting the religions to work together on the beginning of a religious world humanity.

This is not to say we have the answer and you have to follow us. And we are even ready to kill the other, as in the situation we have with the Arab nations today.

So this is all something which has to be worked out. You cannot reproach religions from being born. They were born out of a wonderful view, but this wonderful view cannot include the entire world anymore because they are so many other religions, who wanted and still want to do the same.

**Douglas:** How do individuals bridge those gaps between religions? Have you had experience with that?

**Robert:** It is still very, very, very almost non-existent. But you have more and more religious leaders who are beginning to work together, which was not even the case before. For a long time they refused to talk to the others, and for any people who have relations or who talk to another religion, they were told by the heads [of their respective faiths], "Don't do this! You don't have the right. There is only one religion. It is our religion." But progressively people are starting to become interested in other religions, because you have more people from that religion now alive and the world expands. So you discover that they are not so different, and they should not be condemned because they have been born in different

conditions which might be just differences in the nature of [how they view] heaven and the earth.

It is most difficult to obtain a worldwide union of religions, because in most of them, it is in their Bible that it is condemned to have relationships with other religions. This is something which still exists and has not been deleted or has not been overcome by the present people. But it should not be a reason to stop the full, further evolution of the planet! OK, you are difficult ones, we give you more time to be part of the totality!

**To be concluded next week.**

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