

RESPONDING TO THE PERFECT STORM...

ASSUMING THAT BIRDS DO FLY, HELPING LEAD THE WAY AHEAD.

Because a place where birds don't fly is a place where people don't mix, ideas don't get sparked, friendships don't get forged, stereotypes don't get broken, collaboration doesn't happen, trust doesn't get built and freedom doesn't ring. That is not the kind of place we want America to be. That is not the kind of place we can afford America to be. An America living in a defensive crouch cannot fully tap the vast rivers of idealism, innovation, volunteerism, and philanthropy that still flow through our nation. And it cannot play the vital role it has long played for the rest of the world – as a beacon of hope and the country that can always be counted on to lead the world in response to whatever is the most important challenge of the day. We need that America – *and we need to be that America* – more than ever today.

This is the book about why.

The core argument is very simple: America has a problem and the world has a problem. America's problem is that it has lost its way in recent years – partly because of 9/11 and partly because of the bad habits that we have let build up over the last three decades, bad habits that have weakened our society's ability and willingness to take on big challenges.

The world also has a problem: It is getting *hot, flat, and crowded*. That is, global warming, the stunning rise of middle classes all over the world, and rapid population growth have converged in a way that could make our planet dangerously unstable. In particular, the convergence of hot, flat, and crowded is tightening energy supplies, intensifying the extinction of plants and animals, deepening energy poverty, strengthening petro-dictatorship, and accelerating climate change. How we address these interwoven global trends will determine a lot about the quality of life on earth in the twenty-first century.

I am convinced that the best way for America to solve its big problem – the best way for America to get its “groove” back – is for us to take the lead in solving the world's big problem. In a world that is getting hot, flat, and crowded, the task of creating the tools, systems, energy sources, and ethics that will allow the planet to grow in cleaner, more sustainable ways is going to be the biggest challenge of our lifetime.

But this challenge is actually an opportunity for America. If we take it on, it will revive America at home, reconnect America abroad, and retool America for tomorrow.