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Contact: Chrissa Pullicino
Office: 845.266.4444, ext. 404

President Bill Clinton to Deliver Keynote Address at Omega Conference

Where We Go From Here Conference Will Examine Sustainability as a Question of Values & a Challenge of Systems Design—Now Including Conference Live Stream

RHINEBECK, NY—Nearly a year after Hurricane Sandy demonstrated just how real the threat of climate change is, the Omega Center for Sustainable Living (OCSL) is hosting [Where We Go From Here: Opportunities & Solutions for an Interdependent World](#), a conference that addresses the imperative for examining sustainability issues from a holistic perspective based on the interconnection between human behavior, economic and social systems, and the environment. The conference will be held October 4–6, 2013, and will feature keynote speaker President Bill Clinton, 2005 MacArthur Fellow Majora Carter, environmentalist Paul Hawken, economist Jeremy Rifkin, and other major leaders in sustainability. The conference also will be available free to the public via live stream on Saturday, October 5, and Sunday, October 6.

As the problems of climate change and dwindling resources manifest themselves more clearly and urgently, the conference will assess the shortcomings of current sustainability efforts—and create a road map for going forward that places whole-systems thinking front and center.

“With ever more frequency and intensity, we are seeing the effects of being out of balance with the earth and each other. We cannot solve this problem without considering the whole—understanding the big picture *and* finding our place within it,” said Robert “Skip” Backus, chief executive officer at Omega and the visionary behind the Omega Center for Sustainable Living (OCSL). “We are thrilled that President Clinton will deliver the keynote speech. Omega is proud to initiate the discussion about where we go from here, and to serve as a model for a whole-systems approach to sustainability.”

Founded four years ago, the OCSL includes the first green building in America to receive both LEED® Platinum and Living Building Challenge™ certifications, and has evolved into an emerging environmental leader, offering programs that teach the regenerative environmental practices modeled by the building. Omega Institute is integrating similar designs into other facilities on its Rhinebeck, New York campus. A recent addition to the Omega Women’s Leadership Center is the first commercial project in the United States to meet Passive House certification standards—the building uses very little energy and the space is designed to reduce heating costs by 75%.

“Recognizing our interdependence—to each other and to the planet—is key to finding solutions to our pressing environmental challenges,” said Backus.

Where We Go From Here will include keynote talks, panel discussions, stories from the field, and a tour of the award-winning Omega Center for Sustainable Living.

Leading economists, environmentalists, philanthropists, designers, architects, and activists round out the list of speakers, including:

- **[President Bill Clinton](#)**, Founder of the Clinton Foundation and 42nd President of the United States, was the first Democratic president in six decades to be elected twice, and led the U.S. to the longest economic expansion in American history, including the creation of more than 22 million jobs. After the leading the White House, President Clinton established the Clinton Foundation with the mission to improve global health, strengthen economies, promote healthier childhoods, and protect the environment by fostering partnerships among governments, businesses, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and private citizens to turn good intentions into measurable results. clintonfoundation.org
- **[Jeremy Rifkin](#)**, president of the Foundation on Economic Trends, is an authority on economic sustainability. His books include *The Third Industrial Revolution* and *The Empathic Civilization*. foet.org
- **[Janine Benyus](#)**, a biologist, consultant, and author of six books, including the classic *Biomimicry*, is cofounder of the Biomimicry Institute, a nonprofit organization that promotes the study and imitation of nature's remarkably efficient designs. biomimicry.net
- **[David W. Orr](#)** is a professor, founder of the Oberlin Project, and author of *Ecological Literacy*. oberlinproject.org
- **[Majora Carter](#)**, recipient of a MacArthur "genius" Fellowship, founded Sustainable South Bronx in 2001 when few were talking about sustainability, and even fewer, in places like the South Bronx. Since 2008, her consulting company, Majora Carter Group, has exported climate adaptation, urban micro-agribusiness, and leadership development strategies for business, government, foundations, universities, and economically underperforming communities. majoracartergroup.com
- **[Paul Hawken](#)** is an environmentalist, author, and entrepreneur who founded some of the first natural food companies in America to rely solely on sustainable agriculture. paulhawken.com
- **[Bob Berkebile](#)** is an influential sustainable design architect and community planner, a founding principal of BNIM Architects, and a board member of the U.S. Green Building Council, the Nature Conservancy, and the Center for Global Community. bnim.com
- **[Michael E. Reynolds](#)** is an architect and founder of EarthshipBiotecture. earthship.com

- **[Robert “Skip” Backus](#)** is chief executive officer of Omega and the visionary behind the [Omega Center for Sustainable Living \(OCSL\)](#). He helped lay the foundation for Omega’s environmental and conservation initiatives, including campus recycling and composting, sustainable purchasing and support of local agriculture, water conservation, and 100% sourcing of campus electricity from wind and solar technology.
- **[Carla Goldstein, JD.](#)** is Omega Institute’s chief external affairs officer and cofounder of the [Omega Women’s Leadership Center](#). An attorney with 25 years of experience in public interest advocacy, she has contributed to more than 100 city, state, and federal laws, and has worked extensively on issues related to women’s rights, poverty, public health, and social justice.
- **[Peter Buffett](#)** is an Emmy Award-winning musician, composer, philanthropist, and author of the *New York Times* best-seller *Life Is What You Make It*. [peterbuffett.com](#)
- **[Maya Azucena](#)** is an award-winning singer, activist, and cultural ambassador. At the 2010 United Nations Summit, she was selected by the Office of Secretary General Ban Ki Moon as the exclusive performer at the *Every Woman, Every Child* event. She is also a cofounder of the multimedia website MDGFive.com, which raises awareness for maternal health. [mayaazucena.com](#)
- **[Rob Hopkins](#)**, author of *The Power of Just Doing Stuff* and *The Transition Handbook*, is cofounder of the International Transition Network, a charitable environmental organization. *The Independent* lists him as one of the top environmentalists in the United Kingdom. *The Observer* calls him “one of Britain’s 50 New Radicals.”

Speakers are subject to change.

People can join the conversation about where we go from here on [Twitter @Omega_Institute](#) (conference hashtag #OCSL2013), and on [Facebook.com/Omega.OCSL](#).

For complete details or to register, visit [eOmega.org/ocsl2013](#) or call 800.944.1001.

About Omega Institute for Holistic Studies

Founded in 1977, Omega Institute for Holistic Studies is the nation's most trusted source for wellness and personal growth. As a nonprofit organization, Omega offers diverse and innovative educational experiences that inspire an integrated approach to personal and social change. Located on 200 acres in the beautiful Hudson Valley, Omega welcomes more than 23,000 people to its workshops, conferences, and retreats in Rhinebeck, New York, and at exceptional locations around the world. [eOmega.org](#)

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