

We are the hope: Reflections on my visit to Spokane, Washington

By Wayne Visser

I'd like to share four inspiring messages I took away from my visit in April to Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, a beautiful riverine city and the ancestral home of the Spokane Native American tribe.

The Power of Connection

I had the good fortune to attend A Conversation with Terry Tempest Williams, an award-winning author, environmentalist and Writer in Residence at Harvard Divinity School. She was talking about her latest book, *The Glorians*, which is about "overlooked presences that reveal our shared vulnerability and interconnectedness with the natural world" and "the radical act of attending to beauty and carrying forward against all odds." See more [here](#).

The Spirit of Responsibility

I was visiting Gonzaga University, together with Isabel Braga da Cruz, Pro-Rector of Universidade Católica Portuguesa, at the invitation of President Katia Passerini, to exchange ideas and contribute to her Presidential Speaker event on "Our Common Home", a reference to Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* encyclical in which he encourages universities to become "laboratories of hope" - an invitation taken up by the university's Office of Sustainability, led by Jim Simon, which uses *Laudato Si'* as a framework for action. See more [here](#).

The Agency of Hope

I was also hugely impressed by the work of the Institute for Climate, Water and Environment, led by Brian G. Henning, which is creating systems change, worldview transformation and resilient human and biotic communities through powerful grassroots programs on climate resilience, environmental law, climate literacy and faculty support. They are showing that the antidote to climate despair and eco-anxiety about the future is positive local action in the present. See more [here](#).

The Classroom of Nature

We were lucky enough to participate in a "class on the grass" with the bright and engaging students of Bruce Howard's sustainable business course. And we heard about the impactful outdoor learning approaches of environmental and biology professors Greg Gordon and Brook Swanson. Listening to stories of how the Spokane river and lakes, which were industrially polluted, have been restored to biodiverse habitats hosting beavers, salmon and turtles is testament to the power of regeneration.

Thriving: The Breakthrough Movement to Regenerate Nature, Society and the Economy is available as a paperback, ebook and audiobook.

Source:

First published on Purpose Inspired, May 18, 2026. Available at:
<https://purposeinspired.substack.com/p/we-are-the-hope>