

MEANINGFUL LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

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THE LANGUAGE OF LEADERS

WELCOME TO THE LEADERS LEARNING LABORATORY:

Here is the secret: Inventing context happens in language.

Language happens to be of the most powerful tools leaders—and all of us—have at our disposal. It is what we say that distinguishes us from all other creatures.

Fernando Flores is one of the thought-leaders who distinguished language as not simply a tool we use to describe a world that already exists, but rather *an action that produces a world and a future that would otherwise not have existed.*

This is big. In fact it constitutes a profound shift in understanding our relationship to the world. It implies we are not describers of an objectively knowable world, fixed and the same for everyone. *We are designers*, authors of a world with which we interact and our speaking actually makes things so!

The implications are staggering and have been backed up by all of the latest thinking and studying of Quantum Physics and Philosophy. (For more on the underpinnings of the latest thinking in leadership and management today, contact us.)

Flores says there are five primary moves human beings make in language every day that he names *The Speech Acts*. I will spend the next five months iterating each of them and offering some ideas for practice.

The first is one you have already done if you invented a new context for yourself, your team, or your organization:

DECLARATIONS

“We will go the moon.”

“One day all men (and women) will be judged by the content of their character and not the color of their skin.”

“India will be free.”

“I now pronounce you husband and wife.”

This last quote is a great example. Does marriage exist out there somewhere? Can you go and find a marriage? NO! Marriage is a declaration made in language and backed up with a certain set of practices we all agree constitute being married. There is no marriage out there somewhere. It lives in language and practice. That is it! »

So lets do a little inventory about *declarations*:

- What declarations have you made that now become context, and for which you have invented powerful practices?
- What declarations have you made that no longer serve you, that still run your life? We talked a bit about that already. This is another way to look at what is old and in the background and in conflict with our current declarations.
- What is the biggest declaration you have ever made?
- What declaration is lurking in the background that you knows needs to be made, and that will alter everything?
- What declaration, if made, would catalyze a huge breakthrough on your team, in your organization, in your life?

Leaders make declarations no one else will dare to make. They are out on the skinny branches, going where others are afraid to go. They are willing to fail. Failure. That, my friends, is a topic for another day.

Warmly and with much vision for the declarations you will dare to make that will change the world for us all.

Jen Cohen

Leadership Practices for Personal Mastery • Professional Results that Matter in Today's World

A bit about Flores:

Flores was born in Talca, Chile. He became finance minister in the government of Chilean president Salvador Allende and then spent three years as a political prisoner after the military coup of General Augusto Pinochet. Forced into exile after negotiations on his behalf by Amnesty International, he moved with his family to Palo Alto, California, and worked as a researcher in the Computer Science department at Stanford University. He subsequently obtained his PhD at UC Berkeley under the guidance of Hubert Dreyfus, Stuart Dreyfus, John Searle and Ann Markusen. There he developed his work on philosophy, coaching and workflow technology, influenced by Heidegger, Maturana, John Austin and others. His thesis was titled "Management and Communication in the Office of the Future."