

Creating A Climate For Change

LEWIS GORDON PUGH IS ABOUT TO DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY. From the looks of things, maybe even suicidal.

Clad in a Speedo and a swimmer's cap that displays the Union Jack, the British born extreme athlete is preparing to dive off a glacier into the frigid waters of the Arctic.

In the photograph he is captured at the very moment before his dive, in that split second prior to hurling himself into a habitat intended for animals much better adapted to an unforgiving climate.

"He swam for 20 minutes across the North Pole, which you're not supposed to be able to do because it should be frozen, as it has been for millennia," notes Tucson-based author/scientist/entrepreneur Jane Poynter, speaking with an engaging English accent. "During a swim like this, Lewis' core body temperature drops 10 degrees Fahrenheit. Most of us would die, but he has trained his body to give him a fever. He actually raises his core temperature before he gets into the water."

The photo is one of many startling images in Poynter's new book, *Champions for Change: Athletes Making A World Of Difference*.

The president and co-founder of Paragon Space Development Corporation knows a thing or two about making a difference. Born in Surrey, England, she has long been something of an adventurer, and her life story reads a bit like a film script. In the early 1990s, she was an integral part of the Biosphere 2 experiments that delved into how Man interacts with this fragile world, and how we can sustain life in various environments in the future.

It was a natural leap from those duties to helping to start a company that works with organizations such as NASA and the U.S. Navy to create space suits and dive suits that will help humans to survive in the most inhospitable of environments.

And now she has taken another big step, which she sees as part of a longer thread. "Paragon is about where life could be," she says. "Can we take life into space? And we also work in extreme environments, so how can we enhance life on Earth? This book is about our interaction with life on Earth. What are we doing to it, what does it do to us, and how do we live within that incredibly complex interconnected web of life?"

At first glance, it might seem strange to pair elite athletes with a book about climate change, but Poynter points out how it all fits. "I was introduced to this concept of bringing sports and the environment together by Dr. Tatsuo Okada who founded the Global Sports Alliance. There are very obvious links: when you're out cycling around, you don't want to be sucking in the smog from the car in front of you. People at the last Summer Olympics in Beijing, for instance, had a really hard time breathing."

Once she got rolling on *Champions for Change*, the project picked up steam quickly. "It started as a very small thing — almost a pamphlet. And then I started talking to some of these athletes, and hearing their stories, and what they have experienced environmentally, or what they are doing to help the environment and society at large. I realized, 'We have to do more than that. If we do something small, that's just insulting.' So I talked to the United Nations about it. They'd had an affiliation with the Global Sports Alliance for years, and they were really onboard."

The entire process of creating the book took less than a year, start to finish, and Poynter had to lay it out while athletes were still being interviewed. "I wanted to publish it in time for the Copenhagen climate



Photo by Shelley Welander/She.we Studio. Makeup by Michele Goldstein.

meetings, and the Winter Olympics, because we have a couple of Olympians in it," she says.

There are 38 athletes total, in pursuits ranging from IndyCar racing to surfing to skiing. Many of the names will be familiar to anyone who reads the sports pages — Cincinnati Reds left fielder Chris Dickerson, pro golfer Justin Rose, NASCAR driver Brian Vickers. Others have become icons, transcending their sport, such as surfer-turned-musician Jack Johnson, swimmer Natalie Coughlin (who performed on the TV show *Dancing With the Stars*), and Olympic snowboarder Shaun White, who is known to many who've never hit the slopes due to his endorsement deals.

Also in the mix are people who do unusual things, such as free diving, as well as explorers of various types, and two folks with a local connection: Paralympian Greg Hockensmith (who lives in the Old Pueblo), and cyclist Greg LeMond (who comes out here to train and to participate in El Tour de Tucson).

The other component of the book is educational, but not didactic. "I have brought in quite a heavy dose of science, but it's handled in sidebars so you don't have to swallow it if you don't want to. That's another reason why the book is so photographic. It has more than 100 photos, and I was very lucky that there were a lot of fantastic, world-class photographers who donated their work."

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