Small Steps for NASA, Giant Leaps for Human Fate

From March to July 2011, each of NASA's space shuttles made a final flight, a final touchdown, and were parked in a final place. The way I see it, this was NASA's biggest mistake. These landing spots are the permanent and final resting spots of the space shuttles (I can't imagine them breaking out of the hanger and launching from The California Science Center). By canceling the space shuttle program though, did NASA put our existence in jeopardy?

NASA has begun to move on with space capsule *Orion*, but if NASA does not speed up their process, they could have a significant impact on the future of humankind. All over, there are signs, alerts, and advertisements telling us to recycle and save our Earth; but what if Earth is not our future? Species go extinct, by one estimate, every 10 minutes. Because of overpopulation and tyranny, poverty in third world countries and here in the U.S. are at record highs. We are plunging into disaster with the global warming problems. It is not in thousands of years when this will reach a climax. It could become a serious problem in the next century. Some people, but not many, have been trying and trying to reverse this; and to some extent, humans have been successful (such as trying to cut down on automobile emissions)... but not enough. Our future is likely on another planet, and its time NASA speeds up their process and begins to save the fate of humanity.

Years ago, NASA was on a mission. They were going to send a group of people to Mars. Before the retiring of the space shuttles, that is. Then the government decided that NASA needed to allocate more money to deep space exploration than the moon missions and Mars. The idea was that it would be great to find a perfect Earth like planet. Only, if we do, it would probably be millions of light years away. If we can no longer live on Earth, a place that would take billions of years to travel to would not help. We need a closer place: Mars or one of the moons of a gas planet, such as Europa, Ganymede, Callisto, Titan, or Enceledus would be a good start [1]. We could get to Mars in less than a year and after we get to Mars, set up a colony.

The reason America moved so fast in terms of space exploration in the 1960s is that we were competing with the Soviet Union. We were on the clock to send a man to the moon and explore. Now it appears we do not need to compete and rush... or do we? The world's problems are mounting and mounting and it is not likely we can fix them all. It is only a matter of time until these problems start blowing up to epic proportions. By the turn of the century, many of the world glaciers and ice caps may be completely melted away. This will cause, by the end of 2200, a likely sinking of large parts of many major cities, such as New Orleans and New York City, displacing over 12 million people [2]. Overpopulation and overcrowding are already affecting the whole world population. Many nations have fallen victim to food and water shortages, forcing them to fight with neighbors. Even at home, in Los Angeles, you can see the effects of overcrowding in the rise of home prices and severe effects of rising temperatures in the L.A. rain drought. Unless by some miracle we are able to fix Earth, we are on the clock to get moving. Tic-Toc, climate change and overpopulation are coming. Tic-Toc NASA, it's time to make a plan to start getting out.

Because time is ticking, NASA needs a step-by-step plan. They need a scientific goal to accomplish every six months. For example, NASA should build a capsule in winter 2016, research new fuel in summer 2016, and send a rocket into orbit using this technology by 2018. A step-by-step plan is what made the Apollo missions so successful. They were able to accomplish goals leading to getting a person on the moon in less than 10 years. Doing important things regularly also kept the general public, who are the taxpayers and thus the funders, interested. In the modern age, companies including Apple will release a new device, like an iPhone or iPad or a new software, such as an iOS, about every six months. At school, we are always told to make a schedule and keep track of time at home. Why doesn't NASA do the same thing?

Most people say it would be more economically accurate to go into deep space rather than throw money on colonization. This is because we have no technology for colonization or even a rocket to carry people to Mars for that matter. Maybe for the short term, they're right. However, think about the economic and scientific opportunity on the moon. First of all, land is money. The moon is a free for all in terms of colonization. Anyone can claim the land. The same applies to pretty much anywhere outside of Earth's surface. Minerals are another great thing that can be found on the moon. There are enormous silica deposits on the moon's surface. This can be used for electric parts, and creating rocket fuel. Furthermore, if we go up to the moon, Mars, or anywhere else and mine for resources, nobody knows what other things we could find: oil, gold, fresh water? There is also tremendous scientific opportunity in outer space. Imagine radio instruments, such as a telescope on the moon. Without interference from other radio waves on Earth, science could accomplish so much! [3]

Some argue that we should just leave this kind of colonization up to private programs. I highly disagree. To take a flight on a private rocket, it costs a lot of money. Even though the price will come way down by the time we desperately need these flights, it they will still cost a large amount of money. That means that when the population is moving to colonies and the Earth is in climate collapse, we will have to leave all the people who can't afford a trip behind! That would be completely wrong and inhuman. The government needs to take care of this program so that everyone has an equal opportunity to get into space when it is required for survival.

So, NASA seriously needs to refocus their funding. They need to make a plan and follow it. They need to get to Mars, make plans to get to other places within the solar system, and establish colonies. It's time for action, before we run out of time. NASA must make a move now, and start saving the human race.

Works Cited

Burger, Eric. "Adrift." *Houston Chronicle* [Houston] n.d.: n. pag. Print.

[3] Burger, Eric. "Science Friday Podcast "Test Launch Mark a New Phase for NASA"" Interview by Ira Flatow. n.d.: n. pag. Web.

[2] "Climate Change | Climate Central." *Climate Change | Climate Central*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2014.

"Space and NASA News – Universe and Deep Space Information | Space.com." N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Dec. 2014.

"Will New Technologies Give Critical Boost to Solar Power?" *Yale Environment 360: Opinion,* [1]*Analysis, Reporting & Debate*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Dec. 2014.

"Universe Today." *– Space and Astronomy News*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Dec. 2014.