

Published on Axiom News (<https://axiomnews.com>)

## Climbing the Mountain of Social Change

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Friday, January 11, 2013 -- Kristian Partington

When I was 19, a topographical map of the Indonesian Island of Lombok hanging on a wall in a little pub there caught my eye as I sipped on an ice cold Bintang beer with my friend, Charlie.

The circles on the map grew closer and tighter together towards the centre of the island, and we decided whatever hill was there, we should climb to the top.

Shortly after, we set off to scale Ganung Rinjani, which turned out to be a 3,700-metre active volcano that hovers over the dry landscape like a watchtower.

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*A fundraising climb to the Uhuru peak of Tanzania's Mt. Kilimanjaro sparked to idea for a dedicated website allowing adventure philanthropists to raise money for their favourite charities easily.*

That climb was a key part of an adventure that changed my life, and when I [spoke with Climb for Change co-founder Chantal Schauch](#) the other day about her organization, it all came flooding back.

Chantal and her husband, Mike, along with a small team, climbed a different volcano in 2010. Kilimanjaro, for Chantal at least, was a life-changing event as well. The team raised \$175,000 for an outdoor education program in British Columbia targeting young people with disabilities, and in doing so realized climbing the mountain was the least of their tasks — managing the fundraising logistics was the real challenge.

So Chantal and Mike recently launched [Climb for Change](#), which takes the logistical hassle out of such adventure philanthropy. Based on the enthusiasm in her voice and the niche the site fills in the market, I'd say their venture will likely continue to grow.

In talking with Chantal, I remember how Rinjani affected me — I'd discovered the rush mountaineers chase up each summit they tackle, and I saw the stars of a clear night so close it seemed I could caress them. I also saw the realities of global poverty up close — the money we pooled to pay one porter to carry and cook a bit of food for us was a month's salary for most Indonesians.

Beyond that mountain, I watched the Asian economy crumble in the crisis that unfolded between late 1997 and the summer of 1998. For a kid who'd never been outside of Canada, the rate at which poor people grew poorer astounded me, and between that and the environmental tragedies I later came to understand were happening in the rainforests of Sumatra, my perspective on the world changed dramatically.

Social and environmental justice became part of my lexicon, and, like Chantal and Mike, I've sought to offer what help I can in these realms in the years since, remembering the three rules of mountain climbing:

*"It's always further than it looks. It's always taller than it looks. And it's always harder than it looks."*

Climb on, my friends. There's a long way to go.