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About the Author

Naomi Klein is an award-winning journalist, syndicated columnist and author of the international bestsellers *No Logo*, *The Shock Doctrine, This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate*, and *No Is Not Enough: Defeating the New Shock Politics.* In 2017 she joined *The Intercept* as Senior Correspondent. Recent articles have also appeared in the *Guardian*, *The Nation*, *The New York Times*, the *New Yorker* and *Le Monde*. In November 2016 she was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in Australia.

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ON FIRE

'Naomi Klein is a precious gift: every time I read her words, my heart leaps from sadness and anger to *action*. She takes us deep, down to the roots of what is wrong – and then up, up to a height from which we can see what must be done. Everything we love is at stake now: these writings are our best and brightest hope' **Emma Thompson**

'Naomi Klein applies her fine, fierce and meticulous mind to the greatest, most urgent questions of our times ... I count her among the most inspirational political thinkers in the world today' **Arundhati Roy**

'A critically important thought-leader in these perilous times, a necessary voice as a courageous movement of movements rises from the ashes' **Michelle Alexander**, author of *The New Jim Crow*

'The greatest theorist of climate change' **Amitav Ghosh**, author of *The Hungry Tide*

'Naomi is like a great doctor – she can diagnose problems nobody else sees' **Alfonso Cuarón**

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For

ARTHUR MANUEL

1951–2017

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The future isn't cast into one inevitable course. On the contrary, we could cause the sixth great mass extinction event in Earth's history, or we could create a prosperous civilization, sustainable over the long haul. Either is possible starting from now.

—KIM STANLEY ROBINSON

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Introduction: "We Are the Wildfire"

ON A FRIDAY IN MID-MARCH 2019, THEY STREAMED OUT OF SCHOOLS IN LITTLE rivulets, burbling with excitement and defiance at an illicit act of truancy. The little streams emptied onto grand avenues and boulevards, where they combined with other flows of chanting and chatting children and teens, dressed in leopard leggings and crisp uniforms and everything in between.

Soon the rivulets were rushing rivers: 100,000 bodies in Milan, 40,000 in Paris, 150,000 in Montreal.

Cardboard signs bobbed above the surf of humanity: THERE IS NO PLANET B! DON'T BURN OUR FUTURE. THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE!

Some placards were more intricate. In New York City, a girl held up a lush painting of delicate bumble bees, flowers, and jungle animals. From a distance, it looked like a school project on biodiversity; up close, it was a lament for the sixth mass extinction: 45% OF INSECTS LOST TO CLIMATE CHANGE. 60% OF ANIMALS HAVE DISAPPEARED IN THE LAST 50 YEARS. At the center she had painted an hourglass rapidly running out of sand.

For the young people who participated in the first ever global School Strike for Climate, learning has become a radicalizing act. In early readers, textbooks, and big-budget documentary films, they learned of the existence of ancient glaciers, dazzling coral reefs, and exotic mammals that make up our planet's many marvels. And then, almost simultaneously—from teachers, older siblings, or sequels to those same films—they discovered that much of this wonder has already disappeared, and much of the rest of it will be on the extinction block before they hit their thirties.

But it wasn't only learning about climate change that moved these young people to march out of class en masse. For a great many of them, it was also living it. Outside the legislature building in Cape Town, South Africa, hundreds of young strikers chanted at

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their elected leaders to stop approving new fossil fuel projects. It was just one year ago that this city of four million people was in the clutches of such severe drought that three-quarters of the population faced the prospect of turning on the tap and having nothing come out at all. CAPE TOWN IS APPROACHING DROUGHT "DAY ZERO," read a typical headline. Climate change, for these kids, was not something to read about in books or to fear off in the distance. It was as present and urgent as thirst itself.

The same was true at the climate strike on the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, where residents live in fear of further coastal erosion. Their Pacific neighbor, the Solomon Islands, has already lost five small islands to rising water, with six more at severe risk of disappearing forever.

"Raise your voice, not the sea level!" the students chanted.

In New York City, ten thousand kids from dozens of schools found one another in Columbus Circle and proceeded to march to Trump Tower, chanting "Money won't matter when we're dead!" The older teens in the crowd had vivid memories of when Superstorm Sandy slammed into their coastal city in 2012. "My house got flooded and I was so confused," recalled Sandra Rogers. "And it really made me look into it because you don't learn these things in school."

New York City's huge Puerto Rican community was also out in force on that unseasonably warm day. Some kids arrived draped in the island's flag, a reminder of the relatives and friends still suffering in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, the 2017 storm that knocked out electricity and water in large parts of the territory for the better part of a year, a total infrastructure breakdown that took the lives of roughly three thousand people.

The mood was fierce, too, in San Francisco, when more than a thousand student strikers shared stories of living with chronic asthma because of polluting industries in their neighborhoods—and then getting a whole lot sicker when wildfire smoke choked the Bay Area just a few months before the strike. The testimonies were similar at walk-outs all over the Pacific Northwest, where smoke from record-breaking fires had blotted out the sun for two summers running. Across the northern border in Vancouver, young people had recently succeeded in pressuring their city council to declare a "climate emergency."

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Seven thousand miles away, in Delhi, student strikers braved the ever-present air pollution (often the worst in the world) to shout through white medical masks, "You sold our future, just for profit!" In interviews, some spoke of the devastating floods in Kerala that killed more than four hundred people in 2018.

Australia's coal-addled resource minister declared that "The best thing you'll learn about going to a protest is how to join the dole queue." Undeterred, 150,000 young people poured into plazas in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, and other cities.

This generation of Australians has decided it simply cannot pretend that everything is normal. Not when, at the start of 2019, the South Australian city of Port Augusta had reached an oven-worthy 121°F (49.5°C). Not when half the Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest natural structure made up of living creatures, had turned into a rotting underwater mass grave. Not when, in the weeks leading up to the strike itself, they had seen bushfires combine into a massive blaze in the state of Victoria, forcing thousands to flee their homes, while in Tasmania, wildfires destroyed old-growth rain forests that are unlike any ecosystem in the world. Not when, in January 2019, a combination of extreme temperature swings and poor water management led the entire country to wake up to apocalyptic images of the Darling River clogged with the floating carcasses of one million dead fish.

"You have failed us all so terribly," said fifteen-year-old strike organizer Nosrat Fareha, addressing the political class as a whole. "We deserve better. Young people can't even vote but will have to live with the consequences of your inaction."

There was no student strike in Mozambique; on March 15, the day of the global walkouts, the whole country was bracing for the impact of Cyclone Idai, one of the worst storms in African history, which drove people to take refuge at the tops of trees as the waters rose and would eventually kill more than one thousand people. And then, just six weeks later, while it was still clearing the rubble, Mozambique would be hit by Cyclone Kenneth, yet another record-breaking storm.

Wherever in the world they live, this generation has something in common: they are the first for whom climate disruption on a planetary scale is not a future threat, but a lived reality. And not in a few unlucky hot spots, but on every single continent, with pretty

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much everything unraveling significantly faster than most scientific models had predicted.

Oceans are warming 40 percent faster than the United Nations predicted just five years ago. And a sweeping study on the state of the Arctic published in April 2019 in *Environmental Research Letters*, led by renowned glaciologist Jason Box, found that ice in various forms is melting so rapidly that the "Arctic biophysical system is now clearly trending away from its 20th Century state and into an unprecedented state, with implications not only within but also beyond the Arctic." In May 2019, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services published a report about the startling loss of wildlife around the world, warning that a million species of animals and plants are at risk of extinction. "The health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever," said the Platform's Chair, Robert Watson. "We are eroding the very foundations of economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide. We have lost time. We must act now."

And so, just as US schoolchildren now grow up practicing "active shooter drills" starting in kindergarten, many of these students have had school days cancelled because of wildfire smoke, or learned to pack an evacuation bag ahead of hurricanes. A great many children have been forced to leave their homes for good because prolonged drought destroyed their parents' livelihood in Guatemala, or contributed to the outbreak of civil war in Syria.

It has been over three decades since governments and scientists started officially meeting to discuss the need to lower greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the dangers of climate breakdown. In the intervening years, we have heard countless appeals for action that involve "the children," "the grandchildren," and "generations to come." We were told that we owed it to them to move swiftly and embrace change. We were warned that we were failing in our most sacred duty to protect them. It was predicted that they would judge us harshly if we failed to act on their behalf.

Well, none of those emotional pleas proved at all persuasive, at least not to the politicians and their corporate underwriters who could have taken bold action to stop the climate disruption we are all living through today. Instead, since those government meetings

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began in 1988, global CO_2 emissions have risen by well over 40 percent, and they continue to rise. The planet has warmed by about 1°C since we began burning coal on an industrial scale and average temperatures are on track to rise by as much as four times that amount before the century is up; the last time there was this much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, humans didn't exist.

As for those children and grandchildren and generations to come who were invoked so promiscuously? They are no longer mere rhetorical devices. They are now speaking (and screaming, and striking) for themselves. And they are speaking up for one another as part of an emerging international movement of children and a global web of creation that includes all those amazing animals and natural wonders that they fell in love with so effortlessly, only to discover that it was all slipping away.

And yes, as foretold, these children are ready to deliver their moral verdict on the people and institutions who knew all about the dangerous, depleted world they would inherit and yet chose not to act.

They know what they think of Donald Trump in the United States and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Scott Morrison in Australia and all the other leaders who torch the planet with defiant glee while denying science so basic that these kids could grasp it easily at age eight. Their verdict is just as damning, if not more so, for the leaders who deliver passionate and moving speeches about the imperative to respect the Paris Climate Agreement and "make the planet great again" (France's Emanuel Macron, Canada's Justin Trudeau, and so many others), but who then shower subsidies, handouts, and licenses on the fossil fuel and agribusiness giants driving ecological breakdown.

Young people around the world are cracking open the heart of the climate crisis, speaking of a deep longing for a future they thought they had but that is disappearing with each day that adults fail to act on the reality that we are in an emergency.

This is the power of the youth climate movement. Unlike so many adults in positions of authority, they have not yet been trained to mask the unfathomable stakes of our moment in the language of bureaucracy and overcomplexity. They understand that they are fighting for the fundamental right to live full lives—

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lives in which they are not, as thirteen-year-old climate striker Alexandria Villaseñor puts it, "running from disasters."

On that day in March 2019, organizers estimate, there were nearly 2,100 youth climate strikes in 125 countries, with 1.6 million young people participating. That's quite an achievement for a movement that began just eight months earlier with a single fifteen-year-old girl in Stockholm, Sweden.

GRETA'S "SUPERPOWER"

The girl in question is Greta Thunberg, and her story has important lessons about what it will take to protect the possibility of a livable future—and not for some abstract idea of "future generations" but for billions of people alive today.

Like many of her peers, Greta started learning about climate change when she was around eight years old. She read books and watched documentaries about species collapse and melting glaciers. She became obsessed. She learned that burning fossil fuels and eating a meat-based diet were major contributors to planetary destabilization. She discovered that there was a delay between our actions and the planet's reactions, which means that more warming is already locked in, no matter what we do.

As she grew up and learned more, she focused on the scientific predictions about how radically the earth is on track to change by 2040, 2060, and 2080 if we stay on our current course. She made mental calculations about what this would mean to her own life: the shocks she would have to endure, the death that could surround her, the other life forms that would disappear forever, the horrors and privations that would await her own children should she decide to become a parent.

Greta also learned from climate scientists that the worst of this was not a foregone conclusion: that if we took radical action now, reducing emissions by 15 percent a year in wealthy countries like Sweden, then it would dramatically increase the chances of a safe future for her generation and the ones that followed. We could still save some of the glaciers. We could still protect many island nations. We might still avoid massive crop failure that would force hundreds of millions, if not billions, of people to flee their homes.

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If all this were true, she reasoned, then "we wouldn't be talking about anything else ... If burning fossil fuels was so bad that it threatened our very existence, how could we just continue like before? Why were there no restrictions? Why wasn't it made illegal?"

It made no sense. Surely governments, especially in countries with resources to spare, should be leading the charge to achieve a rapid transition within a decade, so that by the time she was in her mid-twenties, consumption patterns and physical infrastructure would be fundamentally transformed.

And yet her government, a self-styled climate leader, was moving much more slowly than that, and indeed, global emissions were continuing to rise. It was madness: the world was on fire, and yet everywhere Greta looked, people were gossiping about celebrities, taking pictures of themselves imitating celebrities, buying new cars and new clothes they didn't need—as if they had all the time in the world to douse the flames.

By age eleven, she had fallen into a deep depression. There were many contributing factors, some related to being different in a school system that expects all kids to be pretty much the same. ("I was the invisible girl in the back.") But there was also a feeling of great sorrow and helplessness about the fast deteriorating state of the planet—and the inexplicable failure of those in power to do much of anything about it.

Thunberg stopped speaking and eating. She became very ill. Eventually, she was diagnosed with selective mutism, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and a form of autism that used to be called Asperger's syndrome. That last diagnosis helped explain why Greta took what she was learning about climate change so much harder and more personally than many of her peers.

People with autism tend to be extremely literal and, as a result, often have trouble coping with cognitive dissonance, those gaps between what we know intellectually and what we do that are so pervasive in modern life. Many people on the autism spectrum are also less prone to imitating the social behaviors of the people around them—they often don't even notice them—and instead tend to forge their own unique path. This often involves focusing with great intensity on areas of particular interest, and frequently having difficulty putting those areas of interest aside (also known

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as compartmentalization). “For those of us who are on the spectrum,” Thunberg says, “almost everything is black or white. We aren’t very good at lying, and we usually don’t enjoy participating in this social game that the rest of you seem so fond of.”

These traits explain why some people with Greta’s diagnosis become accomplished scientists and classical musicians, applying their super focus to great effect. It also helps explain why, when Thunberg trained her laser-like attention on climate breakdown, she was completely overwhelmed, with no way to protect herself from the fear and grief. She saw and felt the full implications of the crisis and could not be distracted from it. What’s more, the fact that other people in her life (classmates, parents, teachers) seemed relatively unconcerned did not send her reassuring social signals that the situation wasn’t really so bad, as such signals do for children who are more socially connected. The apparent lack of concern of those around her terrified Thunberg even more.

To hear Greta and her parents tell it, a big part of emerging from her dangerous depression was finding ways to reduce the unbearable cognitive dissonance between what she had learned about the planetary crisis and how she and her family were living their lives. She convinced her parents to join her in becoming vegan, or at least vegetarian, and, biggest of all, to stop flying. (Her mother is a well-known opera singer, so this was no small sacrifice.)

The amount of carbon kept out of the atmosphere as a result of these lifestyle changes was minute. Greta was well aware of that, but persuading her family to live in a way that began to reflect the planetary emergency helped ease some of the psychic strain. At least now, in their own small ways, they were not pretending that everything was fine.

The most important change Thunberg made, however, had nothing to do with eating and flying. It had to do with finding a way to show the rest of the world that it was time to stop acting like everything was normal when normal would lead straight to catastrophe. If she desperately wanted powerful politicians to put themselves on emergency footing to fight climate change, then she needed to reflect that state of emergency in her own life.

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That's how, at age fifteen, she decided to stop doing the one thing all kids are supposed to do when everything is normal: go to school to prepare for their futures as adults.

"Why," Greta wondered, "should we be studying for a future that soon may be no more when no one is doing anything whatsoever to save that future? And what is the point of learning facts in the school system when the most important facts given by the finest science of that same school system clearly means nothing to our politicians and our society."

So, in August 2018, at the start of the school year, Thunberg didn't go to class. She went to Sweden's parliament and camped outside with a handmade sign that read simply, SCHOOL STRIKE FOR THE CLIMATE. She returned every Friday, spending all day there. At first, Greta, in her thrift shop blue hoodie and tousled brown braids, was utterly ignored, like an inconvenient panhandler tugging at the conscience of stressed-out, harried people.

Gradually, her quixotic protest got a bit of press attention, and other students, and a few adults, started visiting with signs of their own. Next came the speaking invitations—first at climate rallies, then at UN climate conferences, at the European Union, at TEDxStockholm, at the Vatican, at the British Parliament. She was even invited to go up that famous mountain in Switzerland to address the rich and mighty at the annual World Economic Summit in Davos.

Every time she spoke, Greta's interventions were short, unadorned, and utterly scathing. "You are not mature enough to tell it like it is," she told the climate change negotiators in Katowice, Poland. "Even that burden you leave to us children." To British MPs she asked, "Is my English OK? Is the microphone on? Because I'm beginning to wonder."

To the rich and mighty at Davos who praised her for giving them hope, she replied, "I don't want your hope ... I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is."

To those in the rarified crowd of CEOs, celebrities, and politicians who spoke of climate disruption as if it were a problem of universal human shortsightedness, she shot back, "If everyone is guilty, then no one is to blame, and someone *is* to blame ... Some

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people, some companies, some decision-makers in particular know exactly what priceless values they have been sacrificing to continue making unimaginable amounts of money." She paused, took a breath, and said, "And I think many of you here today belong to that group of people."

Her sharpest rebuke to the Davos set was wordless. Rather than staying in one of the five-star hotel rooms on offer, she braved -18°C temperatures (0°F) to sleep outside in a tent, snuggled in a bright yellow sleeping bag. ("I'm not a great fan of heat," Greta told me.)

When she spoke to these rooms filled with adults in suits, who clapped and filmed her on their smartphones as if she were a novelty act, Thunberg's voice rarely trembled. But the depth of her feeling—of loss, of fear, of love for the natural world—was always unmistakable. "I beg you," Thunberg said in an emotional address to members of the European Parliament in April 2019. "Please do not fail on this."

Even if the speeches did not dramatically change the actions of the policymakers in those stately rooms, they did change the actions of a great many people outside them. Nearly every video of the fiery-eyed girl went viral. It was as if by yelling "Fire!" on our crowded planet, she had given countless others the confidence they needed to believe their own senses and smell the smoke drifting in under all those tightly closed doors.

It was more than that, too. Listening to Thunberg speak about how our collective climate inaction had nearly stolen her will to live seemed to help others feel the fire of survival in their own bellies. The clarity of Greta's voice gave validation to the raw terror so many of us have been suppressing and compartmentalizing about what it means to be alive amid the sixth great extinction and surrounded by scientific warnings that we are flat out of time.

Suddenly, children around the world were taking their cues from Greta, the girl who takes social cues from no one, and were organizing student strikes of their own. At their marches, many held up placards quoting some of her most piercing words: I WANT YOU TO PANIC, OUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE. At a massive school strike in Düsseldorf, Germany, demonstrators held aloft a giant papier-

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mâché puppet of Greta, brow furrowed and braids dangling, like the patron saint of pissed-off kids everywhere.

Greta's voyage from invisible schoolgirl to global voice of conscience is an extraordinary one, and looked at more closely, it has a lot to teach about what it is going to take for all of us to get to safety. Thunberg's overarching demand is for humanity as a whole to do what she did in her own family and life: close the gap between what we know about the urgency of the climate crisis and how we behave. The first stage is to name the emergency, because only once we are on emergency footing will we find the capacity to do what is required.

In a way, she is asking those of us whose mental wiring is more typical—less prone to extraordinary focus and more capable of living with moral contradictions—to be more like her. She has a point.

During normal, nonemergency times, the capacity of the human mind to rationalize, to compartmentalize, and to be distracted easily is an important coping mechanism. All three of these mental tricks help us get through the day. It's also extremely helpful to look unconsciously to our peers and role models to figure out how to feel and act—those social cues are how we form friendships and build cohesive communities.

When it comes to rising to the reality of climate breakdown, however, these traits are proving to be our collective undoing. They are reassuring us when we should not be reassured. They are distracting us when we should not be distracted. And they are easing our consciences when our consciences should not be eased.

In part, this is because if we were to decide to take climate disruption seriously, pretty much every aspect of our economy would have to change, and there are many powerful interests that like things as they are. Not least the fossil fuel corporations, which have funded a decades-long campaign of disinformation, obfuscation, and straight-up lies about the reality of global warming.

As a result, when most of us look around for social confirmation of what our hearts and heads are telling us about climate disruption, we are confronted with all kinds of contradictory signals, telling us instead not to worry, that it's an exaggeration, that there are countless more important problems, countless

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shinier objects to focus on, that we'll never make a difference anyway, and so on. And it most certainly doesn't help that we are trying to navigate this civilizational crisis at a moment when some of the most brilliant minds of our time are devoting vast energies to figuring out ever-more-ingenious tools to keep us running around in digital circles in search of the next dopamine hit.

This may explain the odd space that the climate crisis occupies in the public imagination, even among those of us who are actively terrified of climate collapse. One minute we're sharing articles about the insect apocalypse and viral videos of walruses falling off cliffs because sea ice loss has destroyed their habitat, and the next, we're online shopping and willfully turning our minds into Swiss cheese by scrolling through Twitter or Instagram. Or else we're binge-watching Netflix shows about the zombie apocalypse that turn our terrors into entertainment, while tacitly confirming that the future ends in collapse anyway, so why bother trying to stop the inevitable? It also might explain the way serious people can simultaneously grasp how close we are to an irreversible tipping point and still regard the only people who are calling for this to be treated as an emergency as unserious and unrealistic.

"I think in many ways that we autistic are the normal ones, and the rest of the people are pretty strange," Thunberg has said, adding that it helps not to be easily distracted or reassured by rationalizations. "Because if the emissions have to stop, then we must stop the emissions. To me that is black or white. There are no gray areas when it comes to survival. Either we go on as a civilization or we don't. We have to change." Living with autism is anything but easy—for most people, it "is an endless fight against schools, workplaces and bullies. But under the right circumstances, given the right adjustments it *can* be a superpower."

The wave of youth mobilization that burst onto the scene in March 2019 is not the result of one girl and her unique way of seeing the world. Greta is quick to note that she was inspired by another group of teenagers who rose up against a different kind of failure to protect their futures: the students in Parkland, Florida, who led a national wave of class walkouts demanding tough controls on gun ownership after seventeen people were murdered at their school in February 2018.

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Nor is Thunberg the first person with tremendous moral clarity to yell "Fire!" in the face of the climate crisis. It has happened multiple times over the past several decades; indeed, it is something of a ritual at the annual UN summits on climate change. But perhaps because these earlier voices belonged to brown and black people from the Philippines, the Marshall Islands, and South Sudan, those clarion calls were one-day stories, if that. Thunberg is also quick to point out that the climate strikes themselves were the work of thousands of diverse student leaders, their teachers, and supporting organizations, many of whom had been raising the climate alarm for years.

As a manifesto put out by British climate strikers put it, "Greta Thunberg may have been the spark, but we're the wildfire."

For a decade and a half, ever since reporting from New Orleans with water up to my waist after Hurricane Katrina, I have been trying to figure out what is interfering with humanity's basic survival instinct—why so many of us aren't acting like our house is on fire when it so clearly is. I have written books, made films, delivered countless talks and cofounded an organization (The Leap) devoted, in one way or another, to exploring this question and trying to help align our collective response to the scale of the climate crisis.

It was clear to me from the start that the dominant theories about how we had landed on this knife edge were entirely insufficient. We were failing to act, it was said, because politicians were trapped in short-term electoral cycles, or because climate change seemed too far off, or because stopping it was too expensive, or because the clean technologies weren't there yet. There was some truth in all the explanations, but they were also becoming less true over time. The crisis wasn't far off; it was banging down our doors. The price of solar panels has plummeted and now rivals that of fossil fuels. Clean tech and renewables create far more jobs than coal, oil, and gas. As for the supposedly prohibitive costs, trillions have been marshaled for endless wars, bank bailouts, and subsidies for fossil fuels, in the same years that coffers have been virtually empty for climate transition. There had to be more to it.

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This book, made up of long-form reporting, think pieces, and public talks written over the span of a decade, tracks my own attempt to probe a different set of barriers—some economic, some ideological, but others related to the deep stories about the right of certain people to dominate land and the people living closest to it, stories that underpin Western culture. The essays here return frequently to the kinds of responses that might succeed in toppling those narratives, ideologies, and economic interests, responses that weave seemingly disparate crises (economic, social, ecological, and democratic) into a common story of civilizational transformation. Today, that kind of bold vision increasingly goes under the banner of a "Green New Deal."

I have chosen to organize the pieces in the order in which they were written, with the original month and year appearing at the start. It's a structure that, while involving the occasional return to a theme, reflects the evolution of my own analysis as I tested these ideas out in the world and worked in collaboration with countless friends and colleagues in the global climate justice movement. With the exception of the final essays specifically about the Green New Deal, which have been expanded significantly, I resisted the urge to modify the texts and instead left them pretty much intact, clarifying time frames and adding updates in footnotes and postscripts here and there.

Keeping the pieces in chronological order has one main benefit. It's a nagging reminder that we are in a fast-moving crisis, even though it may not always seem so. In the short decade spanned by this book, the planet has undergone enormous and irreparable damage, from rapid disappearance of Arctic sea ice to mass die-offs of coral reefs. The part of the world where my family is from, the west coast of British Columbia, has seen the collapse of certain species of Pacific salmon that hold entire magnificent ecosystems on their backs.

The political map has also changed dramatically over this decade. It has seen the resurgence of an increasingly violent hard right, a force that is gaining power across the globe by stoking hatred against ethnic, religious, and racial minorities, often manifesting as xenophobic hatred directed at the growing numbers of people who have been forced to leave their homelands.

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These planetary and political trends are, I am convinced, in a kind of lethal dialogue with one another.

For me, the temporal references throughout the book are like the hourglass on that student striker's sign: relentless evidence that as our societies fail to act like our house is on fire, the house does not just sit there burning like some sort of fixed, looping GIF. The conflagration gathers more and more heat—and irreplaceable parts of the house actually do burn to the ground. Gone, forever.

My primary emphasis in this book is on the countries sometimes referred to as the Anglosphere (the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom) and on some non-English-speaking parts of Europe. In part, this is by happenstance—I currently live and work in the United States, have spent most of my life in Canada, and have participated extensively in climate change debates and initiatives in Australia, the United Kingdom, and other parts of western Europe.

This focus stems mainly, however, from my ongoing attempt to understand why the governments of these countries have proven particularly belligerent when it comes to meaningful climate action. There is still a significant (though thankfully shrinking) segment of the population in each of these nations that chooses to deny the basic fact that human activity is causing the planet to dangerously warm, a glaring truth that is uncontroversial and uncontested in most parts of the world.

Even when outright denial recedes and a more progressive environmental era seems to dawn (in the United States under Barack Obama, in Canada under Justin Trudeau), it is still extremely difficult for these governments to accept the overwhelming scientific evidence that we need to stop extending the fossil fuel frontier and, in fact, need to start winding down existing production. Australia, despite its wealth, insists on massively expanding coal production in the teeth of the climate crisis; Canada has done the same with the Alberta tar sands; the United States has done the same with Bakken oil, fracked gas, and deepwater drilling, becoming the world's largest oil exporter; the United Kingdom has attempted to ram through fracking operations despite fierce opposition and evidence linking it to earthquakes.

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In trying to make sense of this, I explore some of the specific ways that these nations led the way in forging the global supply chain that gave birth to modern capitalism, the economic system of limitless consumption and ecological depletion at the heart of the climate crisis. It's a story that begins with people stolen from Africa and lands stolen from Indigenous peoples, two practices of brutal expropriation that were so dizzyingly profitable that they generated the excess capital and power to launch the age of fossil fuel–led industrial revolution and, with it, the beginning of human-driven climate change. It was a process that required, from the start, pseudoscientific as well as theological theories of white and Christian supremacy, which is why the late political theorist Cedric Robinson argued that the economic system birthed by the convergence of these fires should more aptly be called "racial capitalism."

Alongside the theories that rationalized treating humans as raw capitalist assets to exhaust and abuse without limit were theories that justified treating the natural world (forests, rivers, land and water animals) in precisely the same way. Millennia of accumulated human wisdom about how to safeguard and regenerate everything from forests to fish runs were swept away in favor of a new idea that there was no limit to humanity's ability to control the natural world, nor to how much wealth could be extracted from it without fear of consequence.

These ideas about nature's boundlessness are not incidental to the nations of the Anglosphere; they are foundational myths, woven deep into national narratives. The huge natural wealth of the lands that would become the United States, Canada, and Australia were, from their very first contact with European ships, imagined as sort of body-double nations for colonial powers that were running out of nature to exhaust back home. No more. With the "discovery" of these seemingly limitless "new worlds," God had granted a reprieve: *New* England, *New* France, *New* Amsterdam, *New* South Wales—proof positive that Europeans would never run out of nature to exhaust. And when one swath of this new territory grew depleted or crowded, the frontier would simply advance and *new* "new worlds" would be named and claimed.

In these pages, I explore this original imaginative sin as it relates to the climate crisis from many different vantage points:

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the black death of BP's oil spreading through the Gulf of Mexico; the Vatican under Pope Francis's "ecological conversion"; Trump's grab-and-go America; the die-off in the Great Barrier Reef, where Captain James Cook's ship (a converted coal barge) once ran aground; and more. I also try to understand the intersection of these collapsing mythologies, as nature reveals itself to be anything but infinitely exhaustible and abusable, and the terrifying resurgence of the ugliest and most violent parts of these colonial narratives throughout the Anglosphere—the parts about the right of supposedly superior white Christians to inflict tremendous violence on those they have decided to classify as beneath them in a brutal hierarchy of humanity.

I am not arguing that these nations are the sole drivers of our ecological breakdown, not by any means. Our crisis is global, and many other countries have polluted recklessly during this same period. (Pick your petrostate, or watch China's and India's emissions soar.) But rapid acceleration of climate breakdown has occurred simultaneous to, and as a direct result of, the successful globalization of the high consumer lifestyle birthed in the nations I write about in this book. These are, moreover, the nations that have been polluting at extremely high levels for centuries and that, therefore, had an obligation, under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change that their governments all signed, to lead the way on emission reduction before the developing world. As US officials used to say during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, "We broke it, we bought it."

A PEOPLE'S EMERGENCY

Yet, as deep as our crisis runs, something equally deep is also shifting, and with a speed that startles me. As I write these words, it is not only our planet that is on fire. So are social movements rising up to declare, from below, a people's emergency. In addition to the wildfire of student strikes, we have seen the rise of Extinction Rebellion, which exploded on the scene and kicked off a wave of nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience, including a mass shutdown of large parts of Central London. Extinction Rebellion is calling on governments to treat climate change as an emergency, to rapidly transition to 100 percent renewable energy

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in line with climate science, and to democratically develop the plan for how to implement that transition through citizens' assemblies. Within days of its most dramatic actions in April 2019, Wales and Scotland both declared a state of "climate emergency," and the British Parliament, under pressure from opposition parties, quickly followed suit.

In this same period in the United States, we have seen the meteoric rise of the Sunrise Movement, which burst onto the political stage when it occupied the office of Nancy Pelosi, the most powerful Democrat in Washington, DC, one week after her party had won back the House of Representatives in the 2018 midterm elections. Wasting no time on congratulations, the Sunrisers accused the party of having no plan to respond to the climate emergency. They called on Congress to immediately adopt a rapid decarbonization framework, one as ambitious in speed and scope as Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, the sweeping package of policies designed to battle the poverty of the Great Depression and the ecological collapse of the Dust Bowl.

As a writer and organizer, I have been part of the global climate movement for years, and it has taken me to many large marches and mass actions, including the four-hundred-thousand-strong People's Climate March in New York City in 2014. I have covered and participated in major UN climate summits that made lofty promises to rise to humanity's existential challenge (Copenhagen in 2009, Paris in 2014). As a board member of the climate campaign group 350.org, I was part of kick-starting the fossil fuel divestment movement, which, as of December 2018, succeeded in getting $8 trillion in investment wealth to commit to selling off its holdings in fossil fuel companies. And I have been part of several movements, some of them successful, to stop the laying of new oil pipelines.

The activism we are seeing today builds on this history and also changes the equation completely. Though many of the efforts just described were large, they still engaged primarily with self-identified environmentalists and climate activists. If they did reach beyond those circles, the engagement was rarely sustained for more than a single march or pipeline fight. Outside the climate movement, there was still a way that the planetary crisis could be

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forgotten for months on end or go barely mentioned during pivotal election campaigns.

Our current moment is markedly different, and the reason for that is twofold: one part having to do with a mounting sense of peril, the other with a new and unfamiliar sense of promise.

THE RADICALIZING POWER OF CLIMATE SCIENCE

One month before the Sunrisers occupied the office of soon-to-be House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report that had a greater impact than any publication in the thirty-one-year history of the Nobel Peace Prize–winning organization.

The report examined the implications of keeping the increase in planetary warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7°F). Given the worsening disasters we are already seeing with about 1°C of warming, it found that keeping temperatures below the 1.5°C threshold is humanity's best chance of avoiding truly catastrophic unraveling.

But doing that would be extremely difficult. According to the UN World Meteorological Organization, we are on a path to warming the world by 3–5°C by the end of the century. Turning our economic ship around in time to keep the warming below 1.5°C would require, the IPCC authors found, cutting global emissions approximately in half in a mere twelve years—that's eleven years as this book goes to press—and getting to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Not just in one country but in every major economy. And because carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has already dramatically surpassed safe levels, it would also require drawing a great deal of that down, whether through unproven and expensive carbon capture technologies or the old-fashioned ways: by planting billions of trees and other carbon-sequestering vegetation.

Pulling off this high-speed pollution phaseout, the report establishes, is not possible with singular technocratic approaches like carbon taxes, though those tools must play a part. Rather, it requires deliberately and immediately changing how our societies produce energy, how we grow our food, how we move ourselves

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rural America and building a wave of low-cost housing in cities, to planting more than two billion trees and launching soil protection programs in regions ravaged by the Dust Bowl.

The various plans that have emerged for a Green New Deal–style transformation envision a future where the difficult work of transition has been embraced, including sacrifices in profligate consumption. But in exchange, day-to-day life for working people has been improved in countless ways, with more time for leisure and art, truly accessible and affordable public transit and housing, yawning racial and gender wealth gaps closed at last, and city life that is not an unending battle against traffic, noise, and pollution.

Long before the IPCC's 1.5°C report, the climate movement had focused on the perilous future we faced if politicians failed to act. We popularized and shared the latest terrifying science. We said no to new oil pipelines, gas fields, and coal mines; no to universities, local governments, and unions investing endowments and pensions in the companies behind these projects; no to politicians who denied climate change and no to politicians who said all the right things but did the wrong ones. All this was critical work, and it remains so. But while we raised the alarm, only the relatively small "climate justice" wing of the movement focused its attention on the kind of economy and society we wanted instead.

That was the game changer of the Green New Deal bursting into the political debate in November 2018. Wearing shirts that read WE HAVE A RIGHT TO GOOD JOBS AND A LIVABLE FUTURE, hundreds of young members of the Sunrise Movement chanted for a Green New Deal as they lined the halls of Congress shortly after the 2018 midterms. There was finally a big and bold "yes" to pair with the climate movement's many "no's," a story of what the world could look like after we embraced deep transformation, and a plan for how to get there.

The Green New Deal's roots-up approach to the climate crisis is not itself new. This kind of "climate justice" framework (as opposed to the more generic "climate action") has been attempted locally for many years, with its origins in the Latin American and US environmental justice movements. And the concept of a Green New Deal has made it into the platforms of a few small Green parties around the world.

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My 2014 book, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, explored this kind of holistic approach in depth. The historical precedent I used back then came from a Bolivian climate negotiator named Angélica Navarro Llanos, who delivered a blistering address to a 2009 UN climate summit: "We need a massive mobilization larger than any in history. We need a Marshall Plan for the Earth," she declared, invoking the ways that the United States, fearing an ascendant Soviet Union, had helped rebuild large parts of Europe after World War II. "This plan must mobilize financing and technology transfer on scales never seen before. It must get technology onto the ground in every country to ensure we reduce emissions while raising people's quality of life. We have only a decade."

We wasted the entire decade following that call with tinkering and denial, and we will never get back the wonders that are gone as a result—or the lives and livelihoods destroyed because of it. Navarro Llanos and her fellow Bolivians have watched the majestic glaciers that provide fresh water for the metropolitan area of La Paz (home to 2.3 million people) recede with alarming speed. In 2017, reservoirs ran so low that water rationing was introduced for the first time in the capitol and a state of emergency had to be declared across the country.

But that lost decade does not make Navarro Llanos's prescient call less relevant—it makes it far more so, given that, as the IPCC report made so clear, hundreds of millions of lives hang in the balance with every half degree of warming we either enable or avoid.

Something else has changed since that call was issued a decade ago. Before, when social movements and small country governments made these demands, it felt as if we were screaming into a political void. There was really no cohort in the governments of the wealthiest countries on the planet willing to entertain this kind of emergency approach to the climate crisis. Trickle-down market mechanisms were the only ones on offer. And when there was an economic downturn, even those inadequate offerings evaporated.

That is no longer the case today. There is now a bloc of politicians in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere, some just a

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decade older than the young climate activists in the streets, ready to translate the urgency of the climate crisis into policy, and to connect the dots among the multiple crises of our times. Most prominent among this new political breed is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who, at twenty-nine, became the youngest woman ever elected to the US Congress.

Introducing a Green New Deal was part of the platform she ran on. Quickly after winning the elections, several members of the small group of young congresswomen sometimes referred to as the "squad" pledged their support for the bold initiative, particularly Rashida Tlaib of Detroit and Ayanna Pressley of Boston.

So, when hundreds of members of the Sunrise Movement came to Washington after the midterms to hold demonstrations and sit-ins, these newly elected representatives did not keep a safe distance from the rabble-rousers. Instead, they joined them, with Tlaib speaking at one of their rallies (and bringing candy for the crowd to help keep their energy up) and Ocasio-Cortez dropping by their sit-in at Nancy Pelosi's office.

"I just want to let you all know how proud I am of each and every single one of you for putting yourselves and your bodies and everything on the line to make sure that we save our planet, our generation, and our future," she told the demonstrators, reminding them that "my journey here started at Standing Rock," a reference to her decision to run for Congress after participating in the anti-pipeline protests led by the Standing Rock Sioux.

Then, three months later, Ocasio-Cortez, along with Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts, stood in front of the Capitol and launched a formal resolution for a Green New Deal, a rough outline of the key planks of the transformation. The Green New Deal resolution begins with the terrifying science and short time lines in the IPCC report and calls for the United States to launch a moon shot approach to decarbonization, attempting to reach net-zero emissions in just one decade, in line with getting the entire world there by mid-century.

As part of this sweeping transition, it calls for huge investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and clean transportation. It states that workers moving from high-carbon industries to green ones should have their wage levels and benefits protected, and it guarantees a job to all who want to work. It also calls for the

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communities who have borne the toxic brunt of dirty industries, so many of them Indigenous, black, and brown, not only to benefit from the transitions but to help design them at the local level. And as if all this weren't enough, it folds in key demands from the growing Democratic Socialist wing of the Democratic Party: free universal health care, child care, and higher education.

By previous standards, the framework was shockingly bold and progressive, but there was so much momentum for it, particularly among young voters, that in short order it became a litmus test for large parts of the party. By May 2019, with the race to head the Democratic Party in full swing, the majority of leading presidential hopefuls claimed to support it, including Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris, Cory Booker, and Kirsten Gillibrand. It had been endorsed, meanwhile, by 105 members of the House and Senate.

The emergence of the Green New Deal means there is now not only a political framework for meeting the IPCC targets in the United States but also a clear (if long-shot) path to turning that framework into law. The plan is pretty straightforward: elect a strong supporter of the Green New Deal in the Democratic primaries; take the White House, the House, and the Senate in 2020; and start rolling it out on day one of the new administration (the way FDR did with the original New Deal in the famous "first 100 days," when the newly elected president pushed fifteen major bills through Congress).

If the IPCC report was the clanging fire alarm that grabbed the attention of the world, the Green New Deal is the beginning of a fire safety and prevention plan. And not a piecemeal approach that merely trains a water gun on a blazing fire, as we have seen so many times in the past, but a comprehensive and holistic plan to actually put out the fire. Especially if the idea spreads around the world—which is already beginning to happen.

Indeed, in January 2019, the political coalition European Spring (an outgrowth of a project called DiEM25, where I serve on the advisory panel) launched a Green New Deal for Europe, a sweeping and detailed plan to embed an agenda of rapid decarbonization within a broader social and economic justice agenda: "From a green investment programme to drive through the world's ecological transition to clear action on ending the scandal of tax

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havens; from humane and effective migration policy to a clear plan to tackle poverty in our continent; from a Workers' Compact to a European Convention on Women's Rights and much more, the Green New Deal is the go-to document for anyone wishing to break the dogma of 'There Is No Alternative' and bring back hope to our continent," the coalition announced.

In Canada, a broad coalition of organizations has come together to call for a Green New Deal, with the leader of the New Democratic Party adopting the frame (if not its full ambition) as one of his policy planks. The same is true in the United Kingdom, where the opposition Labour Party is, as I write, in the midst of intense negotiations over whether to adopt a Green New Deal–style platform similar to the one being proposed in the United States.

The various versions of a Green New Deal that have emerged in the past year have something in common. Where previous policies were minor tweaks to incentives that were designed to cause minimal disruption to the system, a Green New Deal approach is a major operating system upgrade, a plan to roll up our sleeves and actually get the job done. Markets play a role in this vision, but markets are not the protagonists of this story—people are. The workers who will build the new infrastructure, the residents who will breathe the clean air, who will live in the new affordable green housing and benefit from the low-cost (or free) public transit.

Those of us who advocate for this kind of transformative platform are sometimes accused of using the climate crisis to advance a socialist or anticapitalist agenda that predates our focus on the climate crisis. My response is a simple one. For my entire adult life, I have been involved in movements confronting the myriad ways that our current economic systems grinds up people's lives and landscapes in the ruthless pursuit of profit. My first book, *No Logo*, published almost exactly twenty years ago, documented the human and ecological costs of corporate globalization, from the sweatshops of Indonesia to the oil fields of the Niger Delta. I have seen teenage girls treated like machines to make our machines, and seen mountains and forests turned to trash heaps to get at the oil, coal, and metals beneath.

The painful, even lethal, impacts of these practices were impossible to deny; it was simply argued that they were the

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exports). That meant direct job creation by the state, huge investment in the public sector, subsidies for German firms, and support for strong labor unions. The effort was widely regarded as Washington's most successful diplomatic initiative.

Each precedent has its own glaring weaknesses and contradictions. The US military alone is, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists, "the largest institutional consumer of oil in the world." And warfare, with its devastating costs to humanity, nature, and democracy, is no model for social change. The climate threat, moreover, will never feel as menacing as Nazis on the march—at least not until it is significantly too late for our behaviors to have a meaningful impact.

The wartime mobilizations, and the huge rebuilding efforts afterward, were certainly ambitious, but they were also highly centralized, top-down transformations. If we defer to central governments in that way in the face of the climate crisis, we should expect highly corrupt measures that further concentrate power and wealth in the hands of a few big players, not to mention systemic attacks on human rights, a phenomenon I have traced repeatedly in my work on disaster capitalism in the aftermath of wars, economic shocks, and extreme weather events. A climate change shock doctrine is a real and present danger, the first signs of which I discuss in these pages.

The New Deal makes a far-from-ideal analogy as well. Most of its programs and protections were designed in a push and pull with social movements, as opposed to merely handed down from on high like the wartime measures. But the New Deal fell short of pulling the US economy out of economic depression, its main goal, and its programs overwhelmingly favored white, male workers. Agricultural and domestic workers (many of them black) were left out, as were many Mexican immigrants (some one million of whom faced deportation in the late 1920s and 1930s), and the Civilian Conservation Corps segregated African American participants and excluded women (except at one camp, where the latter learned canning and other domestic tasks). And while Indigenous peoples won some gains under New Deal programs, land rights were violated by both massive infrastructure projects and some conservation efforts. New Deal relief agencies, particularly in the

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southern states, were notorious for their biases against unemployed African American and Mexican American families.

The Ocasio-Cortez/Markey Green New Deal resolution goes to considerable lengths to outline how it plans to avoid repeating these injustices, listing as one of its core goals "stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth." As Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley said at a town hall in Boston, "This is not just an opportunity to fix ... the first New Deal, but also to transform the economy."

The biggest limitation with all these historical comparisons, from the New Deal through to the Marshall Plan, is that, together, they succeeded in kick-starting and massively expanding the high-carbon lifestyle of suburban sprawl and disposable consumption that is at the heart of today's climate crisis. The tough truth, as the IPCC's bombshell report stated explicitly, is that "there is no historical precedent for the scale of the necessary transitions, in particular in a socially and economically sustainable way"—a reference to the fact that global emissions have only ever dropped significantly during times of deep economic crisis, such as the Great Depression and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and that the wars that spurred rapid fire societal transformations were humanitarian and ecological disasters.

My own view is that as flawed as each historical analogy necessarily is, each is still useful to study and invoke. Every one, in its own way, presents a sharp contrast to how governments have responded to climate breakdown thus far. Over two and a half decades, we have seen the creation of complex carbon markets; the occasional small carbon tax; the replacement of one fossil fuel (coal) with another (gas); various incentives for consumers to buy different kinds of lightbulbs and energy-efficient home appliances; and offers from companies to opt for greener alternatives if we are willing to pay more for them. Yet, only a few countries (most significantly, Germany and China) have made serious enough investments in the renewable sector to see a rollout at anything like the speed required.

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We are slowly starting to see a shift to a more aggressive regulatory approach in a handful of countries, invariably as a result of strong social movement pressure. A few countries, states, and provinces have placed bans or moratoriums on fracking for gas. The government of New Zealand, significantly, has announced it will no longer issue leases for offshore oil drilling. Norway's government has announced plans to prohibit the sale of cars with internal combustion engines by 2025, a move that will certainly accelerate a shift to electric vehicles if its aggressive targets spread to other countries. But no national government of a wealthy country has been willing to have a frank discussion about the need for high consumers to consume less or for fossil fuel companies to pay to clean up the mess they created.

And how could it have been otherwise? The past forty years of economic history have been a story of systematically weakening the power of the public sphere, unmaking regulatory bodies, lowering taxes for the wealthy, and selling off essential services to the private sector. All the while, union power has been dramatically eroded and the public has been trained in helplessness: no matter how big the problem, we have been told, it's best to leave it to the market or billionaire philanthro-capitalists, to get out of the way, to stop trying to fix problems at their root.

That, most fundamentally, is why the historical precedents from the 1930s through to the 1950s are still useful. They remind us that another approach to profound crisis was always possible and still is today. Faced with the collective emergencies that punctuated those decades, the response was to enlist entire societies, from individual consumers to workers to large manufacturers to every level of government, in deep transitions with clear common goals.

Past problem solvers did not look for a single "silver bullet" or "killer app"; nor did they tinker and wait for the market to trickle-down fixes for them. In each instance, governments deployed a barrage of robust policy tools (from direct job creation on public infrastructure to industrial planning to public banking) all at once. These historical chapters show us that when ambitious goals and forceful policy mechanisms are aligned, it is possible to change virtually all aspects of society on an extremely tight deadline, just as we need to do in the face of climate breakdown today. The

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failure to do so is a choice, not an inevitability of human nature. As Kate Marvel, a climate scientist at Columbia University and NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, says, "We're not doomed (unless we choose to be)."

These precedents remind us of something equally important: we don't need to figure out every detail before we begin. Every one of these earlier mobilizations contained multiple false starts, improvisations, and course corrections. And as we will see later on, the most progressive responses happened only because of relentless pressure from organized populations. What matters is that we begin the process right away. As Greta Thunberg says, "We cannot solve an emergency without treating it like an emergency."

That does not mean we simply need a New Deal painted green, or a Marshall Plan with solar panels. We need changes of a different quality and character. We need wind and solar power that is distributed and, where possible, community owned, rather than the New Deal's highly centralized, monopolistic river-damming hydro and fossil fuel power. We need beautifully designed, racially integrated, zero-carbon urban housing, built with democratic input from communities of color—rather than the sprawling white suburbs and racially segregated urban housing projects of the postwar period. We need to devolve power and resources to Indigenous communities, smallholder farmers, ranchers, and sustainable fishing folk so they can lead a process of planting billions of trees, rehabilitating wetlands, and renewing soil—rather than handing over control of conservation to the military and federal agencies, as was overwhelmingly the case in the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps.

And even as we insist on naming an emergency as an emergency, we need to constantly guard against this state of emergency becoming a state of exception, in which powerful interests exploit public fear and panic to roll back hard-won rights and steamroll profitable false solutions.

In other words, we need something we've never tried, and to pull it off, we will have to recapture the sense of possibility and the can-do spirit that have been sorely missing since Ronald Reagan announced that "the nine most dangerous words in the English language are 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'" By reviving the historical memory of these (and other) periods of

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