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**HOW TO
CHANGE THINGS**

Women protest militarization after Acteal massacre.
Photo: Mariana Mora



CHAPTER

14

POST-ISSUE ACTIVISM

Decolonizing The Revolutionary Imagination: Values Crisis, the Politics of Reality, and Why There's Going to Be a Common-Sense Revolution in This Generation

By Patrick Reinsborough

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If you expect to see the final results of your work, you simply have not asked a big enough question. — I.F. Stone

Introduction: Post-Issue Activism

Our planet is heading into an unprecedented global crisis. The blatancy of the corporate power grab and the accelerating ecological meltdown is evidence that we do not live in an era where we can afford the luxury of fighting merely the symptoms of the problem. As is often noted, crisis

photo top: Jason Justice



provides both danger and opportunity. The extent to which these two opposing qualities define our era will be largely based on the appeal and breadth of the social movements that arise to address the crisis.

This essay is part of my own struggle to explore a politics that is commensurate with the scale of the global crisis. In part it was inspired by a profound strategy insight I received while watching a circling bird of prey. The raptor seemed to spend hours calmly drifting on the breezes, waiting and watching, then suddenly made a lightning quick dive to seize its prey. Had I only witnessed the raptor's final plunge, I might not have realized that it took hours of patient surveillance for the raptor to be in the right place to make a seemingly effortless kill. I was struck by what a clear metaphor the raptor's circling time is for what our movements need to do in order to be successful. Social change is not just the bird of prey's sudden plunge—the flurry of direct confrontation—but rather the whole process of circling, preparing, and strategizing.

Analysis is the most import tool in the social change toolbox. It is this process of analysis—the work to find the points of intervention and leverage in the system we're working to transform—that suggests why, where, and how to use the other tools. Many of us are impatient in our desire for change, and those of us from privileged backgrounds are oftentimes unschooled in the realities of long-term struggle.

I often recall the Buddhist saying, "The task before us is very urgent, so we must slow down." This essay is my effort to "slow down" a bit and explore some new analytical tools. My hope is that it will incite deeper conversations about strategies for building movements with the inclusiveness, creativity, and depth of vision necessary to move us toward a more just and sane world.

Let's begin by asking why aren't more global North movements coming forward with systemic critiques? Why, despite the increasingly obvious nature of the crisis, isn't there more visible resistance to the corporate takeover of the global political system, economy, and culture?

The answer to this question lies in our exploration of how pathological values have shaped not only the global system but also our ability to imagine true change. The system we are fighting is not merely structural, it's also inside us, through the internalization of oppressive cultural norms that define our worldview. Our minds have been colonized to normalize deeply pathological assumptions. Thus, oftentimes our own sense of self-defeatism becomes complicit with the anesthetic qualities of a cynical mass media to make fundamental social change seem unimaginable.

As a result, activists frequently ghettoize themselves by self-identifying with protest, and fail to think of themselves as building movements that could actually change power relations. All too often we project our own sense of powerlessness by mistaking militancy for radicalism and mobilization for movement building. It seems highly unlikely to me



FTAA demonstrations, Quito, Ecuador. November, 2002.

that capitalism will be smashed one window at a time. Likewise, getting tens of thousands of people to take joint action is not an end in itself, rather only the first step in catalyzing deeper shifts in the dominant culture. Our revolution(s) will really start rolling when the logic of our actions and the appeal of our disobedience are so clear that they can easily replicate and spread far beyond the limiting definition of "protester" or "activist."

To do so, our movements for justice, ecology, and democracy must deepen their message by more effectively articulating the values crisis underlying the corporate system. We must lay claim to life-affirming, common-sense values and expose one of the most blatant revolutionary truths of the modern era: The corporate-rule system is rooted in sacrificing human dignity and planetary health for elite profit, and it is out of alignment with human values.

This is the domain of post-issue activism—the recognition that the roots of the emerging crisis lie in the fundamental flaws of the modern order and that our movements for change need to talk about redesigning the entire global system—now. Post-issue activism is a dramatic divergence from the slow progression of single-issue politics, narrow constituencies, and Band-Aid solutions. Traditional single-issue politics, despite noble and pragmatic goals, is not just a strategic and gradualist path to the same goal of global transformation. Too often the framework of issue-based struggle needs to affirm the existing system in order to win concessions, and thus fails to nurture the evolution of movements for more systemic change. Much of our social change energy is spent campaigning against the smoke rather than clearly alerting people to the fact that their house is on fire. Post-issue activism will not replace single-issue politics—the people and



ecosystems closest to the smoke need relief now—but rather, it will strengthen ongoing struggles by providing a larger social-change context. Post-issue activism is the struggle to address the holistic nature of the crisis, and it demands new frameworks, new alliances, and new strategies. We must find ways to articulate the connections between all the “issues” by revealing the pathological nature of the system. To do so we must rise to the challenge of going beyond (rather than abandoning) single-issue politics. We have to learn to talk about values, deepen our analysis, and direct more resources into creating political space for a truly transformative arena of social change.

To think about decolonizing the revolutionary imagination, we must reference the history of colonization. Through colonization, Western civilization (“a disease historically spread by sharp swords”) has been violently imposed upon the entire world. Colonialism is not just the process of establishing physical control over territory, it is the process of establishing the ideologies and the identities—colonies in the mind—that perpetuate control. Central to this process has been the manufacture of attitudes of racism, nationalism, patriarchal manhood, and the division of society into economic classes. If we are to take seriously the prospect of decolonizing the revolutionary imagination then we must examine how these attitudes shape the way we conceive of social change. Likewise, we must remember that analysis is shaped by experience, and that those who suffer directly as targets of these oppressive attitudes often live the experiences that create clear analysis. Let us not forget that effective revolutions are based on listening.

In facing the global crisis, the most powerful weapon that we have is our imagination. But first we must liberate ourselves from the conceptual limitations we place on social change. As we expand the realm of the possible we shape the direction of the probable. This means directly confronting the myths and assumptions that make a better world seem unattainable. To that end, this essay endeavors to explore some tools to help us unshackle our imaginations and increase the momentum of the global justice movements’ process of creating a political space to fundamentally redesign the global system.

On a final note of introduction I wish to clarify that most of the ideas presented in this essay are neither new nor truly my own. Ideas by their nature quickly cross-pollinate and grow beyond any individual’s role in their articulation. All activists owe a great debt to shared experience. I personally am indebted to many seasoned activists and theorists from across numerous movements who have shared their thoughts and helped me deepen my analysis. Likewise, all of these ideas are a work-in-progress.



They are intended as tools to spark discussion and encourage debate, and it is my sincerest hope that they will generate more questions than they answer. Questions are always more radical than answers.

The Doomsday Economy

We live in a dangerous time, an urgent time, a time of profound crisis. Ecologically speaking it is an apocalyptic time defined by the sixth mass extinction of the earth’s species,² the destruction of the last wilderness areas, and the forced assimilation of the planet’s few remaining earth-centered cultures. Every ecosystem, every traditional culture, and every subsistence economy is on the chopping block as the global corporatizers force their consumer monoculture “development” model (read antidevelopment) upon the entire world. Corporate capitalism’s drive toward global domination has literally pushed the life support systems of the planet to the point of collapse.

More and more people are recognizing that we are at a turning point. The corporate takeover—the latest offensive in the 500-plus-year conquest of the planet by Western culture—is being met with massive resistance around the world. However, the elite planners and architects of the global economy seem incapable of hearing their multitude of critics and are continuing to push toward total commodification, assimilation, and a global corporate state.

Over the last few years, as corporate power has begun to undermine the economic self-determination and political sovereignty of even the over-consumers of the global North, resistance has grown more visible in the heart of it all—the United States. Unprecedented coalitions have formed, and different movements have been uniting in creative mass protest to slow the pace of corporate globalization. But slowing things down is one thing, replacing the doomsday economy with a democratic, just, and ecologically sane world is another.

The global system is mutating. Although it remains deeply rooted in its history of colonial genocide, corporate power grabs, and ecological devastation, the structure has changed dramatically over the past generation. The biggest shift has been the rise of the speculative economy. As the world financial sector has been deregulated, with many countries forced to drop limits on investment, there has been a dramatic transition in economic priorities from the production of real goods to a global casino economy based on high-risk, short-term speculation.



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In 1986 the world's foreign exchange markets were handling nearly \$200 billion a day. By 1998 this figure had grown eightfold to \$1.5 trillion dollars every day!³ Since the entirety of world trade is estimated to be worth about US \$6.5 trillion a year,⁴ that means that five days of currency transactions surpasses the value of an entire year of world trade. But the most important aspect of this so-called “financial revolution” is that the massive numbers represent growth in the speculative sector of the economy. Financial speculation has accelerated to the point that by the year 2000, for every \$1 of international investment facilitating trade in real goods, \$9 were being spent on short-term speculation.⁵

An understanding of the rise of the speculative economy is key to debunking the neoliberal myth of growing prosperity. The reality is that none of the money circulating in the speculative economy feeds anyone, clothes anyone, nor does it provide anyone with meaningful jobs. Rather, the speculative economy is mostly just a way for rich people—through their corporate institutional proxies—to use the money they already have to make more. Moreover, this massive speculative economy is a powerful destabilizing force that threatens local economies and ecosystems, since speculation is the opposite of sustainability and encourages a deeper disconnect between ecological realities (limits, natural cycles of production, etc.) and the arbitrary mechanics of financial manipulation.

Since 1980 the total value of the planet's financial assets (money in stocks, bonds, bank deposits, and cash) has increased sevenfold, from \$12 trillion in 1980 to \$80 trillion in 2000.⁶ These statistics are supposed to represent the “rising tide that lifts all boats” and the “miracle of economic growth” that is the basis for the politicians' promise of prosperity. But anyone (especially those not brainwashed by the arcane logic of conventional economics) can see that surely seven more earths haven't been created over the last two decades—so where did all this new “wealth” come from?

Once we cut through the numbers games and semantics we recognize that what economists call economic growth is really the liquidation of the natural wealth of the planet. Almost literally, they are destroying the natural economy of living forests to make an economy of disposable paper on which they print money to tell themselves how rich they are. It is a true doomsday economy, incapable of seeing the natural systems that sustain life as anything other than resources to be extracted. The flawed accounting of the speculative economy hides the horrible truth that what the corporate globalizers call “progress” is really the earth's going-out-of-business sale.

Our strategies must be informed by the fact that we're not fighting that colloquialism once called in activist parlance “The Man”—these days we're

fighting “The Machine.” This machine is the culmination of the pathological worldview that has hard-wired patriarchy, white supremacy, capitalist domination, and ecological illiteracy into the global operating system. The rich, white (self-congratulatory) men who have always benefited from global domination continue to do so, but ultimately they have created a runaway machine that is beyond even their own control.

Naming the System (Global Pathology)

In this era of escalating global crisis one of the most important roles radicals can play is to help build a common analysis of the system's flawed design. Not by imposing some kind of dogmatic vanguardism of a single analysis, but rather by creating the political space for a critical mass of people to define the problems they face in their own lives in a systematic way that allows the imagining of fundamental change. We don't have to convince people that something is wrong—as corporate control becomes more blatant and the ecological crisis worsens, the system is doing much of the work to discredit itself. We must, however, help people to imagine alternatives that go beyond tinkering with the symptoms to actually dismantling and redesigning the global system.

Radicals have always struggled to build oppositional power by naming the system. If only it were as easy as putting “Capitalism” or “Corporate Rule” or “Algae Bloom Civilization/Insane World” on a banner, we'd have won the

A Few Notable Characteristics of the Doomsday Economy

- Corporatization and increasingly centralized control
- Reliance on coercion (both physical and ideological) to maintain control
- Drive to commodify all aspects of life
- Community fragmentation/cultural decay (replacement of lived experience with representation—image-based mass culture, television addiction, increasing alienation)
- Elevation of consumerism to the center of public life
- Increased mechanization and blind faith in technology
- Fetishization of speculative/financial wealth
- Distorted accounting that masks the liquidation of ecological and social capital
- Pathological values/flawed assumptions
- Undermining of planetary life support systems, accelerating ecological collapse



Jason Justice

*Crying Mother Earth holds victims of war and globalization.
Puppet by Arts in Action.*

battle by now. But naming the system isn't merely a semantic or intellectual exercise. Rather, it is the revolutionary process through which a critical mass of people recognize the deadly design flaws of the current social order. The process of "naming" is our way of revealing the hypocrisy, brutality, and idiocy of the corporate-controlled world in order to build the popular consciousness necessary to inspire transformative action.

One of the beauties of the recent global uprisings has been their ability to look beyond tactical, cultural, and ideological differences to see a unifying commitment to structural change.

The better we articulate the fundamental flaws of the current world order the more we will see links between the many types of resistance that are springing up to confront the doomsday economy.

A useful description of our current system can be found in the science of pathology, the branch of medical study that examines the nature of disease. The modern system is pathological on many levels, but the disease that most closely corresponds to the global crisis is the quintessential modern pathology—cancer. Cancer is not merely a metaphor but a literal diagnosis of the doomsday economy.⁷

Cancer is a perversion in the biological systems of the human body—our internal ecosystem—when a cell goes haywire and forgets its own boundaries and its own mortality. The infected cell lives forever, dividing and replicating itself without limits until it finally overwhelms the entire biological system of which it is a part. This disease, now so common at the cellular level, is a chillingly apt description of what is happening at the macrolevel—the emergence of a pathological world system.

Corporate power is a cancer in the body politic. Corporations are the institutional embodiment of the perverted values system of modern capitalism—shaped through the historic lens of white male supremacy to be antidemocratic, exploitative, and incapable of respecting ecological

limits. The corporation is a machine that blindly focuses on one function: the maximization of profits. As the elites attempt to institute de facto global corporate rule with their neoliberal free trade agenda, the cancer is metastasizing throughout the host—planet earth.

We can use this analogy to learn about the pathological nature of the corporate takeover by examining four ways in which cancer operates in our physical bodies.

1. *Cancer is a perversion by definition.* Cancer usurps the function of the cell away from the collective interest of the organism and into an illusory self-interest separate from the host. Corporations are the manifestation of a similar perversion in modern culture—alienation from nature and the failure to recognize that our collective self-interest is tied to the overall health of the biosphere. The corporate paradigm is incapable of seeing the ecological reality, the interdependence between humans and ecosystems that define the real limits of the economic sphere. It defines itself around unlimited growth and exists through its desire to expand, consolidate power, and subvert any limits placed upon its ability to maximize profits. Like the cancer cell, it forgets that it is part of and dependent upon a larger biological system
2. *Cancer rewrites the rules.* Cancer infects the cell's genetic instructions to make the cell operate separately from the rest of the organism. This is exactly what corporate elites have done, first in America and then around the world: rewritten the laws to limit democratic tendencies and to consolidate power. Since 1886, when corporations achieved legal "personhood" in the United States through judicial fiat, the corporate form has become the preferred method for elites to organize their wealth and rationalize their seizure of public property and assets.⁸ Corporations continue to undermine the regulatory framework and to subvert democratic decisionmaking with campaign finance corruption, influence peddling, and public relations campaigns. Freed from its historic limits, the corporation has risen to become the defining institution of the modern world. The ideology of privatization has facilitated the corporatization of every aspect of life. International trade, health care, schools, prisons, even the building blocks of life itself—our genetic material—are all being gobbled up as corporations become the de facto tool of governance. Corporate pathology has become so ingrained that the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank, IMF, WTO) now overtly force rule changes to favor corporations over the public interest. The essence of the doomsday economy is that the same corporations who profit from destroying the planet are being allowed to write the rules of the global economy.

Structural adjustment is the macroeconomic equivalent of cancer reprogramming a cell.

3. *Cancer masquerades as the host.* Since cancer is not an outside invader but instead a perversion within the body's existing cells, our immune system fails to recognize it as a threat. The body's defenses fail to attack the cancer because the cancer masquerades as part of the body. This is probably cancer's most important quality for informing our strategies because it is central to understanding how the corporate takeover has managed to become so advanced without triggering a stronger backlash. Corporate rule masquerades as democracy. The elites use the symbols, trappings, and language of democracy to justify control while corporations hijack the democratic form without the democratic function. This process conceals the deepening values perversion—ecological illiteracy masquerades as “market forces,” monopoly capitalism masquerades as “free trade,” and doomsday economics masquerade as “economic growth.”
4. *Cancer kills the host.* Cancer's suicidal destiny is a product of its initial perversion. If not confronted, cancer inevitably metastasizes, spreading throughout the body and killing the host. This is exactly what the corporate pathology is doing to the biosphere. Spread across the planet by waves of colonizers, from the conquistadors to the resource extraction corporations to the International Monetary Fund, the corporate system is on the brink of killing the host—the biological and cultural diversity of life on the planet. People's ability to govern their own lives is sacrificed along the way since corporate rule is antithetical to real democracy. By definition, corporate decisionmaking must operate within the narrow, short-term interests of their shareholders. Corporations are not wealth-generating machines as the American mythology would have us believe, but rather wealth-consolidating machines. Corporations extract the biological wealth of the planet, liquidating our collective natural heritage in order to enrich a tiny minority. The corporate drive to shorten the planning horizon, externalize costs, and accelerate growth has pushed the life support systems of the planet to the brink of collapse.

The Control Mythology: Consume or Die

At the center of the ever-growing doomsday economy is a perverse division of resources that slowly starves the many while normalizing overconsumption for the few. Maintaining control in a system that creates such blatant global injustice relies on the age-old tools of empire: repression, brutality, and terror. Multinational corporations have long

since learned how to “constructively engage” with repressive regimes and put “strong central leadership” to work for their profit margins. Whether it's U.S.-approved military dictatorships or America's own ever-growing incarceration economy, the naked control that is used to criminalize, contain, and silence dissent among the have-nots is obvious.

But this brutality is just one side of the system of global control. Far less acknowledged is that in addition to the widespread use of the stick, the global system relies heavily on the selective use of the carrot. The entire debate around globalization has been framed to ensure that the tiny global minority that makes up the overconsuming class never connects their inflated standard of living with the impoverishment of the rest of the world.

Most people who live outside the small overconsumption class can't help but be aware of the system's failings. But for the majority of American (and more generally, global North) consumers the coercion that keeps them complicit with the doomsday economy is not physical; it is largely ideological, relying heavily on the mythology of America. It is this mythology that buys people's loyalty by presenting a story of the world that normalizes the global corporate takeover.

In this story, America is the freest country in the world and corporate capitalism is the same as democracy. The interests of corporations are represented as serving popular needs—jobs being the simplistic argument—and the goal of U.S. foreign policy is presented as a benevolent desire to spread democracy, promote equality, and increase standards of living. This control mythology prevents people from seeing how pathologized the global system has become. Much of this story is merely crude propaganda that relies on Americans' notorious ignorance about the world, but elements of the control mythology have become so deeply imbedded in our lives that they now define our culture.



Hugh Dandrade



Among the most deep-seated elements of the control mythology is the ethic of an unquestioned, unrestrained right to consume. Consumerism is the purest drug of the doomsday economy. It epitomizes the pathology—the commodification of life’s staples and the human and cultural systems that have been created to sustain collective life.

Childrens’ author Dr. Suess provides an eloquent critique of consumerism in his cautionary tale *The Lorax* when he describes how the forests get destroyed to make useless disposable objects appropriately called “thneeds.” A slick businessman markets “thneeds” and maximizes production until the forest is entirely destroyed. This is the essence of consumerism—creating artificially high rates of consumption by getting people to believe they need excessive or useless things. Overconsumption (invented in America but now exported around the planet) is the engine that drives the doomsday economy. Bigger. Faster. Newer. More! More! More!

We live in a culture of information saturation that constantly redefines an increasingly insane world as normal. Media advocacy group, TV Free America estimates that the average American watches an equivalent of fifty-two days of TV per year.⁹ As corporations have seized the right to manufacture and manipulate collective desire, advertising has grown into a nearly \$200 billion-a-year industry and has become the dominant function of mass media. Feminist media critic Jean Kilbourne estimates that each day the average North American is bombarded by 3,000 print, radio, and television ads.¹⁰ This media saturation plays heavily into the control mythology by overdigesting information, thereby shrinking our attention spans to the point where we can no longer reassemble the story of the global crisis.

The doomsday economy’s elevation of consumerism to the center of public life is causing massive psychological damage to people around the world. Advertising works because it subtly assaults a customer’s self esteem to get them to buy unnecessary stuff. This process is fundamentally dehumanizing. The culture-jamming magazine *Adbusters* has rehashed William S. Burroughs to give us the concept in a slogan: “The Product is You.” The result is a pathologized global monoculture that fetishizes overconsumption, self-gratification, and narcissism. Although this may ensure ongoing profits for the corporations who manage the “culture industry,” it also prevents people from recognizing the impacts of their overconsumption on communities and ecosystems around the world.

The control mythology masks the realities of the doomsday economy by narrowing the popular frame of reference to the point that it’s impossible to see beyond the next up-grade of prepackaged lifestyle. The omnipresent commodification of all aspects of life turns freedom into



“image branding” and “product placement” while the distinction between citizen and consumer becomes more blurred. The army of one. Individual purchasing power. America open for business. How else could we get to the point where the United Nations estimates that nearly one in six people on the planet do not get their basic daily calorie needs met,¹¹ but in America shopping is still presented as entertainment?

In the corporatized world a person’s rights are defined by their purchasing power—access to health care, education, a nutritious diet, mental stimulation, or nature are all a factor of how much money you have. The right to overconsume becomes the centerpiece of the new unspoken Bill of Rights of America, Inc. A country of the corporations, by the corporations, and for the corporations. The unification of Europe looks ready to follow a similar path towards a United States of Europe. The cancer spreads.

Consumerism is the manifestation of our pathological reprogramming to not ask questions about where all the “stuff” comes from. The American bootstrap mythology (as in, “pull yourself up by”) relies on our ecological illiteracy to convince us that everyone could live the “American” overconsumption lifestyle if they only worked hard enough. Fully conditioned consumers think only in terms of themselves, acting as if there were no ecological limits in the world. The cancer cell operates as if it were not part of a larger organism.

The twisted logic of consumerism continues to function as a control mythology even as much of the affluence of working America has been siphoned off by corporate greed. A complex range of sophisticated anesthetics helps bolster the control mythology by keeping people distracted. Whether it’s the digital opium den of 500-channel cable TV, the cornucopia of mood-altering prescription drugs, or now the terror-induced national obsession with unquestioned patriotism, there’s little opportunity for people to break the spell of modern consumerism.

The mythology of prosperity still holds, even as the reality becomes more and more elusive. For now perhaps, but for how much longer? As author and media theorist James John Bell writes, “images of power crumble before empires fall.”¹² There are many signs that the empty materialism of modern consumer life is leaving many ordinary people discontent and ripe for new types of political and cultural transformation.

Articulating the Values Crisis

To articulate the pathology of the corporate system we must avoid debating on the system’s terms. As the classic organizer’s tenet says, “We



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have to organize people where they are at.” In other words, if we tell people our truths in a way that that connects with their experience, they will understand it, and they will believe it.

I find that most people largely believe the stories that activists tell them about bad things happening in the world. Activists excel at packaging issues, explaining the problem, the solution, and the action that people can take. Activists break it all down into sixty-second raps with accompanying flyers, fact sheets, and talking points, and these tactics win important campaign victories. But where is our system-changing mass movement? Although many of our critics are so blinded by propaganda and ideology that they will always see us as naive, unpatriotic, or dangerous, there is already a critical mass of people who recognize that our society is facing severe problems.

This analysis is supported by the work of researcher and author Paul Rey, who has done extensive demographic research into the beliefs and values of the American public. Rey’s work first received prominence through his discovery of the “cultural creatives” which he describes as the cultural by-product of the last forty years of social movements. The defining characteristics of this social grouping includes acceptance of the basic tenets of environmentalism and feminism, a rejection of traditional careerism, big business, and monetary definitions of “success,” a concern with psychological and spiritual development, belief in communities, and a concern for the future. Perhaps most profound is the fact that since the mass media of America still reflects the modern technocratic consumerist worldview, cultural creatives tend to feel isolated and not recognize their true numbers. Most important, based on their 1995, data Rey and his coauthor Sherry Ruth Anderson conclude that there are 50 million cultural creatives in America and the numbers are growing.¹³

Rey has continued his work in *The New Political Compass*, in which he argues with statistical data that the Left/Right breakdown of politics is now largely irrelevant and proposes a new four-directional political compass. Rey’s compass is a fascinating tool for illustrating the complexity of public opinion, mapping not only political beliefs but also cultural shifts. Rey contrasts the Left of New Deal liberalism and big government as “West” with the “East” of cultural conservatism and the religious right. Rey gives “North” on his compass to a grouping he calls the New Progressives, composed largely of cultural creatives and completely unrepresented in the current political system. He defines their major concerns as ecological sustainability, the corporate dominance, child welfare, health care, education, a desire for natural products and personal growth. He contrasts them with “South,” who espouse the Big Business Paradigm of profits



Altered version of the control mythology's battle of the story.

before planet and people, economic growth, and globalization. Again, his statistical data has profound messages for all of us working to change the world. He estimates that whereas only 14 percent of the population supports the Big Business paradigm, 36 percent of Americans fall into the New Progressives category.¹⁴

To me the message is a simple affirmation of postissue activism. Our movements need to stop focusing on *only* the details and start getting the bigger picture of a holistic analysis out there. Unless the details articulate a broader vision, they are just more background noise in our information-saturated culture. The eighteenth-century political frameworks of left versus right no longer fully capture the political fault lines of our era. Perhaps a better description of the real debate is flat earth versus round earth. The corporate globalizers’ program of ever-expanding industrial exploitation of the earth is in such deep denial of the ecological realities of the planet that it is akin to maintaining that the earth is flat. Fortunately, more and more people understand that the earth is in fact round and that we need to make some big changes to both the global system and the way we think of our relationship with the planet. What we need now are social movements with the vision and strategy to harness this consciousness into real momentum for shaping a better world.

The ability to choose your issue is a privilege. Most people involved in resistance are born into their community’s struggle for survival. They

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didn't choose their issue any more than they chose their skin color or their proximity to extractable resources. Activists from more privileged backgrounds have the luxury of choosing what they work on and have to be aware of the dynamics that privilege creates. To expand the base of struggle and support frontline resistance with systemic work we need to confront the silent (and frequently uninformed) consent of the comfortable.

Unfortunately, all too often we still speak in the language of single-issue campaigns and are thus competing with ourselves for overworked, overstimulated people's limited amount of time and compassion. The aware, concerned people who are not immersed in frontline struggle are constantly having to choose between issues. Do I work on global warming or labor rights? World Bank or deforestation? Health care or campaign finance reform? One result is that a lot of people fail to make the connection between a general sense of wrongness about modern society and their own interests and actions. Without an impetus to overcome the colonization of people's revolutionary imaginations it is often easier to retreat into self-centeredness, apathy, or cynicism.

One of the strengths of the emerging global justice movement has been to create a new framework that goes beyond the age of single-issue politics to present the corporate takeover as a unifying cause of many of the planet's ills. The problem has been the amount of information we've been packaging into the critique as we slowly try to work the public through the alphabet soup of corporate cronies, trade agreements, and arcane international finance institutions. I don't doubt people's ability to grapple with the mechanics of corporate globalization but I do doubt our movement's ability to win the amount of air time from the corporate media that we need to download endless facts.

Everything—including the corporate global system—is very complicated. But likewise everything is very simple. There is sick and healthy. Just and unjust. Right and wrong. Despite the obvious oversimplification of binary frameworks, the language of opposing values is a powerful tool to build holistic analysis and subvert the control mythology.

Ultimately, our society must shift collective priorities and engage in a values shift to overcome some of our deepest pathologies such as patriarchy, fear of "otherness," and alienation from nature. However, we must be very careful how we frame this concept. Picture yourself knocking on the country's front door and announcing that you have come to shift people's values. Slam! In fact, this is far too often the way that activists are perceived.

An alternative strategy for a first step is to articulate the values crisis. This means speaking to people in terms of their basic values and showing them that the global system that is engulfing them is out of alignment with those values. In other words we have a "values crisis," a disconnect between what kind of world people want to live in and the corporate world that is rapidly taking over.



Antiwar march and direct action, San Francisco, March 21, 2003.

Long-term activist and movement theorist Bill Moyer wrote about the concept within psychology of "confirmatory bias" or people's habit of screening information based on their own beliefs. In other words, people are much more likely to believe something that reinforces their existing opinions and values than to accept information that challenges their beliefs.¹⁵

Moyer's point is that social movements succeed when we position ourselves within widely held existing values. The emerging global justice movements are already laying claim to core values such as democracy, justice, diversity, and environmental sanity as part of an inclusive vision of a life-affirming future. Now our work is to expose the flawed values of the corporate takeover.

We can articulate the values crisis by showing people that corporate capitalism is no longer grounded in common-sense values. The corporate paradigm is a cancerous perversion that masquerades as being reflective of commonly held values while it writes the rules of the global economy to metastasize corporate control across the planet.

A simple dichotomy for articulating the crisis is the clash between a delusional value system that fetishizes money and a value system centered



around the biological realities of life's diversity¹⁶ (*see sidebar*). We need to cast these opposing value systems as two very different paths for the future of our planet. The path shaped by life values leads toward many choices—decentralized, self-organizing, diversity of different cultures, political traditions, and local economies. In contrast, the money values path leads to fewer and fewer choices and finally to the homogeneity of global corporatization.

It is our job as activists to clarify the choice by revealing the nature of the system and articulating the alternatives. Will it be democracy or global corporate rule? Will we be subsumed into a fossil fuel-addicted global economy or will we build vibrant sustainable local economies? Which will win out, ecological sanity or pathological capitalism? Will it be the corporate globalization of economics and control or a people's globalization of ideas, creativity, and autonomy? Democracy versus corporate rule. Ecology versus pollution. Life versus the doomsday economy. Hope versus extinction.

Framing the Debate

One of the biggest pitfalls activists face to effectively articulate the values crisis is that the category of protester has been constructed to be highly marginal by the establishment. Within the pathological logic of corporate capitalism, dissent is delegitimized to be unpatriotic, impractical, naive, or even insane. Unfortunately, radicals are all too often complicit in our own marginalization by accepting this elite depiction of ourselves as the fringe.

The reality is that the elite policy writers and corporate executives who think the world can continue on with unlimited economic growth in a finite biological system are the wackos, not us. We are not the fringe. We can frame the debate. In fact, as Paul Rey's research has shown us, a sizable percentage of the population already shares our commitment to cultural transformation, and all we need to do is reach them.

The significance of the recent mass actions against corporate globalization has not been tactics. Movements aren't about tactics—take this street corner, blockade that corporate office—movements are about ideas. Movements are about changing the world. When we say a better world is possible, we mean it. We want a world that reflects basic life-centered values. We've got the vision and the other side doesn't. We've got biocentrism, organic food production, direct democracy, renewable energy, diversity, people's globalization, and justice. What have they got?

Money Values versus Life Values

- exploitation / dignity
- centralized control / democratic decisionmaking
- commodification / sacredness
- privatization / global commons
- corporatization / collective responsibility
- shareholders / stakeholders
- output / throughput
- disposable / renewable
- mechanistic models / organic models
- information / wisdom
- productivity / prosperity
- consumers / citizens
- spectator / participant
- global economy / local economies
- extraction / restoration
- monoculture / diversity
- transferrable wealth / replenishable wealth
- property / ecosystem
- alienation from nature / earth-centered values
- absentee landlordism / stewardship
- ecological illiteracy / biocentrism
- proxy decisionmaking / real democracy
- short-term gain / sustainability
- narrow economic indicators / full cost accounting
- artificial scarcity / abundance
- inequitable distribution / economic justice
- corporate rule / global justice
- empire / community
- The System / systemic change

Styrofoam? Neoliberalism? Eating disorders? Designer jeans, manic depression, and global warming?

In a context where the elites hold so much power, almost all our actions are by necessity symbolic. Accepting this can be one of our greatest strengths and help us realize that the most important aspects of our actions are the messages they project into mass culture. We must exploit the power of narrative structure to weave our ideas and actions into compelling stories. Inevitably, our broadest constituency will begin their interaction with new ideas as spectators. Thus, our campaigns and actions must tell inclusive, provocative stories that create space for people to see themselves in the story. We must tell the story of the values crisis. Our stories must make people take sides—are you part of the sickness or are you part of the healing? Are you part of the life-affirming future or are you part of the doomsday economy?

The first step is to separate dissent from the self-righteous tone that many people associate with protest. This tone can be particularly strong in activists from privileged backgrounds who are invested in visible “defection” as a way to validate their resistance. These politics of defection by their very nature create obstacles to communicating with the mainstream and frequently rely on symbols of dissent and rebellion that are already marginalized.

We need new symbols of inclusive resistance and transformation. We need a better understanding how to create effective memes¹⁷—self-replicating units of information and culture—to convey the values crisis. Memes are viral by nature, they move easily through our modern world of information networks and media saturation. We need to be training ourselves to become “meme warriors”¹⁸ and to tell the story of values crisis in different ways for different audiences. We must get a better sense of who our audiences are, and target our messages to fit into their existing experiences.

We need to be media savvy and use the corporate propaganda machine. Not naively as an exclusive means of validating our movements, but as a tool of information self-defense to oppose the information war being waged against us. The corporate media is another tool we can use to name the system and undermine the grip of the dominant mythology. While we play at spin doctoring, we simultaneously need to promote media democracy and capitalize on the alternative and informal media and communication networks as a means to get our message out. Our movements must become the nervous systems of an emerging transformative culture.



Street theater by the Ronald Reagan Home for the Criminally Insane — Bechtel, San Francisco

It's essential that we frame our ideas in such a way that as people wake up to the crisis they have the conceptual tools to understand the systemic roots of the problem. Over the next decade as the global crisis becomes more visible we won't have to do much to convince people about the problem. Rather, our job will be to discredit the elite's Band-Aid solutions and build popular understanding of the need for more systemic solutions.

Whether we are talking about biological contamination, financial collapse, or nuclear meltdowns, if we haven't framed the issue in advance, even the most dramatic breakdowns in the system can be “crisis-managed” away without alerting the public to the system's fundamental failings. But if we do the work to challenge the control mythology and undermine the flawed assumptions, then people will know whom to blame. As we build a public awareness of the values crisis it helps shift the debate away from inadequate reforms and toward redesigning the global system.

This is the strategy of leap-frogging, or framing our issues in such a way that they force the public debate to “leap” over limiting definitions of the problem and elite quick-fixes to embrace systemic solutions. For example, instead of debating how many parts per million of pollution regulatory agencies should allow in our drinking water, we can challenge the right of industrial interests to poison us at all. An effective framing forces

— FRAMING THE CLIMATE CRISIS —

Global warming is an obvious example of an issue where leap-frogging is desperately needed. As global warming creates more visible eco-spasms it will soon become one of the macroissues that redefines politics as we know it.

Global warming, when expanded from the single-issue context of carbon dioxide pollution and redefined as a systemic issue of fossil fuel addiction, becomes a vehicle for exposing the global system's deep design flaws. Thus it can be used not only to show the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of a fossil fuel-based economy but also to indict the system that has created the fossil fuel chain of destruction. When framed properly, this story promotes not only environmentally friendly alternatives, but also democracy ("energy sovereignty"¹⁹) and the need to confront the racism and classism that has allowed the basic human rights of communities impacted by fossil fuel production to be ignored.

The global oil barons are among the most powerful interests on the planet and they have used their influence to block any realistic effort to transition away from fossil fuels. Despite the fact that it is scientifically inadequate to address the problem, the Kyoto Protocol—an international framework for reducing carbon emissions—has been stalled by the political influence of the fossil fuel industry. In response, many concerned American pressure groups have reduced their demands and lobbied for more minor concessions, like fuel efficiency standards, that they might be able to win without having to fundamentally challenge the corporate influence over politics.

But instead of reducing our expectations, when we face the limits of the existing political debate we need to expand our vision and have the courage to leap-frog the political logjams with the values crisis analysis. Strategically, the most significant aspect of the climate crisis is that we know it's going

to get worse and more visible—so why settle for the limited concessions that can be "won" now?

Imagine, hypothetically, ten or fifteen years from now when superhurricanes displace 40 million in Florida, America's corn belt is withering under a mega-drought, and the eastern seaboard is spending \$2 trillion building flood walls. The American public is going to want some answers. If possible, before it gets that bad it's important that people understand that we are not all equally culpable for the destabilization of the global climate. Sure, a lot of people drove SUVs and consumed way more than their share, but let's be clear who did more to destabilize the climate—the soccer moms or Exxon-Mobil?

It's up to activists to ensure that people understand that a small cartel of energy corporations and their financial backers knowingly destabilized our planet's climate for their own personal gain. This may turn out to be the most devastating crime ever perpetrated against humanity, the planet, and future generations.

How we frame the issue will help decide what actually happens when the problem becomes undeniable. Taking the time to frame the climate crisis systemically may not win concessions in the short term but it will pay off when people's outrage can be effectively channeled into fundamental change. Imagine two different scenarios: In the first, a decade of organizing and struggle belatedly convinces the oil barons to approve the Kyoto Protocol in its current inadequate form. As climate chaos accelerates, the oil industry plots how to maintain their monopoly during the transition to sustainable energy. In the other scenario, an empowered populace jails the oil executives, dissolves their illegitimate corporations, and uses their billions to fund the transition to clean energy. Which future would you rather live in?



questions to be asked about the upstream polluters—do we need their product? If so, how can we make it in a way that doesn't pollute? In order to successfully leap-frog colonized imaginations and entrenched power-holders, we must have the skill and courage to articulate real solutions that avoid concessions that dead-end in inadequate reforms.

It is essential that as the ecological crisis becomes self-evident we are building mass awareness of the system's design flaws. As we become more effective at leap-frogging the elite framing of problems, we can prepare people to accept the dramatic changes that will be necessary to make another world possible.

There are any number of macroissues that when framed correctly can help us name the system. Global warming, commodification of basic human needs from health care to water, the rate of technological change, systemic racism, the spread of genetic pollution, ongoing violence against women—these are just a few examples that can tell the story of the values crisis. The challenge is not what issue we work on but how we avoid becoming trapped in the limiting framework of single-issue politics.

Direct Action at the Point of Assumption

Direct action—actions that either symbolically or directly shift power relations—is an essential transformative tool. Direct action can be both a tactic within a broader strategy or a political ethic of fundamental change that defines all one's actions. Every direct action is part of the larger story we are retelling ourselves about the ability of collaborative power to overcome coercive power.

As we endeavor to link systemic change with tangible short-term goals we must seek out the *points of intervention* in the system. These are the places where when we apply our power—usually through revoking our obedience—we are able to leverage change.

Direct action at the *point of production* was one of the original insights of the labor movement. Labor radicals targeted the system where it was directly affecting them and where the system was most vulnerable. From wildcat strikes to sabotage, slowdowns, and factory occupations, point-of-production actions helped promote the dignity and rights of working people.

Modern frontline resistance movements often target the system at the *point of destruction*. We become the frontline resistance by placing our bodies in the way of the harm that is happening. Whether it's plugging the





Eric Wagner

Protest and nonviolent direct action at Bechtel, San Francisco.

effluent pipes that dump poison on a neighborhood, forest defenders sitting in trees marked for cutting, or indigenous peoples blocking road-building into their ancestral homelands, direct action at the point of destruction embodies values crisis. It polarizes the debate in an effort to attract the spotlight of public attention to a clear injustice. But, tragically, the point of destruction is oftentimes far from the public eye, and the values confrontation is made invisible by distance, imbedded patterns of bias, or popular

ignorance. Frequently, the impacted communities have little political voice, so in order to provide support we must find other points of intervention.

Inspiring *point-of-consumption* campaigns have been used by many movements as a way to stand in solidarity with communities fighting at the point of destruction. This is the realm of consumer boycotts, attacks on corporate brand names, and other campaigns that target the commercial sector as a way to shut down the market for destructive products. Activists have confronted retailers selling sweatshop products and forced universities to cancel clothing contracts. Likewise, forest activists have forced major chains to stop selling old-growth forest products. Attacking the point of consumption expands the arena of struggle to mobilize consumers made complicit in the injustice of the globalized economy by making them more aware of their own purchasing decisions. These strategies can be based on a very accessible notion of “ethical shopping” or a more profound rejection of the consumer identity altogether.

The *point of decision* has always been a common and strategic venue for direct action. Whether it’s taking over a slumlord’s office, a corporate boardroom, or the state capital, many successful campaigns have used direct action to put pressure on the decisionmakers they are targeting. Much of the mass action organizing of the past few years has been largely aimed at redefining popular perceptions of the point of decision. The actions at WTO and World Bank meetings, G8 summits and free trade negotiating sessions have helped reveal the corporate takeover by showing

that it is these new institutions of corporate rule that have usurped decisionmaking power.

All of these points of intervention in the system are important, and the best strategies unite efforts across them. As the global financial sector has increasingly become the “operating system” for the planet, the pathological logic of doomsday economics has replaced specific points of decision in driving the corporate takeover. We aren’t just fighting acts of injustice or destruction but rather we are fighting a *system* of injustice and destruction. In recognizing this we must expand our efforts to intervene in physical space, complementing them with similar initiatives in cultural and intellectual space. How can we sidestep the machine and challenge the mentality behind the machine? In other words, we need to figure out how to take direct action at the *point of assumption*.

Targeting assumptions—the framework of myths, lies, and flawed rationale that normalize the corporate takeover— requires some different approaches from actions at the other points of intervention. *Point-of-assumption* actions operate in the realm of ideas and the goal is to expose pathological logic, cast doubt, and undermine existing loyalties. Successful direct action at the point of assumption identifies, isolates, and confronts the big lies that maintain the status quo. A worthy goal for these types of actions is to encourage the most important act that a concerned citizen can take in an era defined by systematic propaganda—*questioning!*

Direct action at the point of assumption is a tool to decolonize people’s revolutionary imaginations by linking analysis and action in ways that reframe issues and create new political space. Whether we’re deconstructing consumer spectacles, exposing the system’s propaganda, or birthing new rhetoric, we need actions that reveal the awful truth—that the intellectual underpinnings of the modern system are largely flawed assumptions. Direct action at the point of assumption is an effort to find the rumors that start revolutions and ask the questions that topple empires.

The first action of the radical ecology network Earth First! is a great example of direct action at the point of assumption. In 1981, at a time when many wilderness preservation groups were fighting the construction of new dams, Earth First! did a symbolic “cracking” of Glen Canyon Dam by unfurling a 300-foot-long plastic wedge from the top of the dam, creating an image of a fissure down the dam’s face.²⁰ This simple symbol sent a powerful message that rather than just stopping new dams, wilderness advocates should be calling for the removal of big dams and the rewilding of dammed rivers. Within the industrial paradigm of dominating



Jason Justice

A DJ spins CDs at a Reclaim the Streets party, February 14, 2004, Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco.

nature, the question of removing a megadam was an unthinkable thought—it was beyond the realm of imagination. The “cracking” action, however, challenged that assumption and created a new political space and a powerful image to forward that agenda. Two decades later, in the late nineties, the unthinkable thought had rippled right up to the power-holders and the U.S. government actually began removing dams.

Likewise, as the anticar movement has grown, groups like Reclaim the Streets have taken effective direct actions at the point of assumption to make the idea of car-free cities imaginable. Reclaim the Streets groups showed what a better world could look like with actions that occupy car-clogged streets and transform them into people-friendly spaces with music, festivity, comfy furniture, and in some cases even grass and plants. Similarly, activists around the world have taken creative “Buy Nothing Day” actions to attack the assumptions of consumerism by calling for a twenty-four-hour moratorium on consumer spending on the busiest shopping day of the year. This simple idea, often popularized using ridicule and humorous spectacle, has led to many successful efforts to define consumerism itself as an issue.

Direct action at the point of assumption has taken many forms—creating new symbols, embodying alternatives, or sounding the alarm. The



Zapatista ski mask is a well-known example of a symbol that functioned as direct action at the point of assumption. The ski masks worn by the Zapatista insurgents and particularly their spokesman Subcomandante Marcos, created a symbol for the invisibility of Mexico’s indigenous peoples. Marcos has eloquently written of the irony that only with the ski masks on—the symbol of militant confrontation—was the government able to see the indigenous peoples it had ignored for so long.²¹

In Argentina the *cacerolazos*—the spontaneous mass banging on *cacerolas* (saucepans)—is a tactic that has helped topple several governments since the popular uprising began in December 2001. The simple, inclusive direct action of banging a saucepan has created a dramatic new space for people from many different backgrounds to unite in resisting neoliberalism and structural adjustment. It broke the assumption that people will simply accept the actions of a government that ignores them.^{xxiii}

Direct action at the point of assumption provides us with many new opportunities to expand the traditional political arenas because it is less reliant on specific physical space than other points of intervention. This gives us the opportunity to choose the terms and location of engagement. Effective point-of-assumption actions can transform the mundane into a radical conversation starter. For instance, putting a piece of duct tape across a prominent logo on your clothing can invite a conversation about corporate commodification.

Media activist James John Bell writes about “Image Events,” events whether actions, images, or stories that “simultaneously destroy and construct [new] meaning.” Image events either replace existing sets of symbols or redefine their meaning through the “disidentification” of humor or shock.²³ A simple application of this concept can be seen in what *Adbuster* magazine’s founder Kalle Lasn dubbed “culture jamming” to describe methods of subverting corporate propaganda by juxtaposing new images or coopting slogans.²⁴ For instance, when McDonald’s hyperfamiliar golden arches are overlaid with images of starving children or Chevron’s advertising slogan is rewritten to say “Do people kill for oil?” the power of corporate images are turned back upon themselves. This type of semiotic aikido exploits the omnipresence of corporate advertising to rewrite the meaning of familiar symbols and tell stories that challenge corporate power. These skills have been artfully applied in billboard liberations, guerrilla media campaigns, and creative actions, but unfortunately they often remain in a limited media realm. We need to expand guerrilla meme tactics to connect with long-term strategies to build grassroots power.

The reliance of many megacorporations on their branding has been widely acknowledged as an Achilles' heel of corporate power. Indeed, effective grassroots attacks on corporate logos and brand image have forced corporations to dump multimillion-dollar advertising campaigns and sometimes even concede to activists' demands. However, not only are there many powerful industries that do not depend on consumer approval but we no longer have time to go after the corporations one at a time. Our movements need to contest the corporate monopoly on meaning. We must create point of assumption actions that go beyond merely jamming the control mythology to actually substituting transformative, life-affirming stories. Culture jamming has largely been applied like a wrench to disable the brainwashing infrastructure of corporate consumerism. We must supplement the wrench with the seed by planting new, transformative stories that use the information-replicating networks of modern society to grow and spread. Our actions must create image events and launch designer memes with the power to supersede the controlling mythologies of consumer culture, the American empire, and pathological capitalism.²⁵

Concerted direct action at the point of assumption in our society could be an effort to draw attention to the design errors of the modern era and encourage widespread disobedience to oppressive cultural norms. We need to plot open attacks on the symbolic order of antilife values. We need easily replicable actions, new symbols, and contagious memes that we can combine with grassroots organizing and alternative institution building to expand the transformative arena of struggle.

What would this look like? What are the big lies and controlling myths that hold corporate rule in place? Where are the points of assumption? How can we exploit the hypocrisy between the way we're told the world works and the way it actually works in order to name the system, articulate the values crisis, and begin decolonizing the collective imagination? These are all questions for our movements to explore together as we challenge ourselves to be pragmatic idealists, calculating provocateurs, and revolutionary dreamers.

Case Study: The San Francisco Uprising

The Bush administration's invasion of Iraq was met with massive resistance in the United States and around the world. In particular, the response in San Francisco was inspiring—20,000 people engaged in mass nonviolent direct action to shut down the financial district. Corporations invested in the mass destruction business (like Bechtel, Citibank, and the Carlyle Group) had their offices blockaded as did a military recruiting station, the British consulate, and a federal office building. Using tactics

ranging from lockdowns to mobile blockades and critical mass bike rides, Bay Area residents transformed the usually car-clogged consumption zone into a living statement of hope and life-affirming resistance to Bush's war for empire. Over the course of the four business days after the invasion began, 2,600 people were arrested for engaging in acts of protest and resistance.

Although this uprising was decentralized and highly organic it grew out of a foundation of organizing laid by an affinity-group-based mobilization called Direct Action to Stop the War (DASW). For the preceding two months, DASW had organized the uprising's launching pad through a weekly spokescouncil, a Web site (www.actagainstawar.org), and the simple notion that a rational response to an illegal and unjust war for empire would be a mass direct action shutting down the financial district.

The real success of the action came not only from the fact that several thousand people were preorganized into affinity groups, but that tens of thousands of people joined in on the day of the action. One of the reasons that so many people joined the action was that it was timed to harness a predictable mass psychic break—a point where the unfolding of events shatters people's illusions that the system reflects their values (such as justice, democracy, peace). A psychic break is a massive point of intervention in the system's assumption of obedience, when people are uniquely open to new actions. In an infamously progressive city like San Francisco there was a predictable antiwar majority but a common framework was needed to facilitate action and make opposition visible.

DASW's work to build this framework for popular resistance was aided by a strategy of telling the future. Telling the future (similar to the "scenario planning" used by the Pentagon and multinational corporations) is a method of manifesting a specific outcome by normalizing a possible scenario. Advertisers have long known that the best way to get people to



Direct Action to Stop the War's direct action manual used the day after the war on Iraq began to mobilize 20,000 activists to shut down San Francisco.

design: justicedesign.com
illustration: Mona Caron

David Hanks



The Brass Liberation Orchestra plays as residents shut down the San Francisco Financial District, March 20, 2003.

do something (like buy their product) is to have them take action in their head first. Hence much of advertising is designed to help people imagine themselves buying a product—to normalize a specific commercial scenario. Strategies that tell the future can use some of the same principles to unify people around a common goal and vision to literally self-organize a specific future through building collective belief. DASW organizers challenged the mass media narrative of normalized passivity by promoting an alternative story where if Bush invaded Iraq, residents would rise up in a nonviolent insurrection and shut down the financial district.

The future uprising was foretold with a series of foreshadowing events ranging from a high-profile press conference to an open letter to city residents to preemptive actions in the financial district, including a shut down of the Pacific Stock Exchange in which eighty people were arrested. All of this outreach, organizing, and media work was successful in the goal of promoting DASW's website and the action meeting spot, including getting it printed on the front page of newspapers and mentioned on major radio and television stations.

Likewise, in creating a public image of the action, DASW focused on a values-based critique that worked to mainstream the concepts of noncooperation and civil disobedience. The DASW Web site and kick-off press conference emphasized the diversity of participation by featuring endorsements from leaders of a cross-section of Bay Area communities—queer, labor, faith, people of color, veterans, seniors, even the former CEO of the Pacific Stock Exchange. Without sacrificing the opportunity to put out a systemic analysis, the organizing appealed to mainstream values—democracy, sense of security, justice, belief in international law, patriotism—and used them to leverage opposition to the invasion of Iraq. As a result the streets were flooded with people from different walks of life. The combination of effectively telling the future and articulating a values-based analysis had reached a cross-section of American society who had never engaged in direct action before.



Twenty thousand people shut down large parts of San Francisco using nonviolent direct action the day after the war on Iraq begins.

David Hanks



Global Intifada affinity group shuts down San Francisco Financial District's central artery—Market Street, March 20, 2003.

David Hanks



Eric Wagner

Outraged Bay Area residents stop commute traffic into Financial District.



Eric Wagner

Thousands join the San Francisco shutdown, transforming it from a planned mass action into a popular antiwar uprising.

This type of inclusive mass organizing may stretch the comfort zone of many radicals; however, it has great potential to exploit some of the growing fault lines in American society. Bush's naked imperial agenda is challenging a lot of Americans' sense of national identity as an international beacon of democracy and justice. Regardless of the fact that much of America's national story has always been a hypocritical mythology, there is an incredible opportunity for activists to lay claim to widely held values like security, democracy, and national pride and direct these energies into "imploding" empire. Let's ask ourselves how our resistance can galvanize antiwar sentiments into a deeper movement for fundamental change that articulates the values crisis—the disconnect between the values of empire and the values that ordinary Americans hold. In San Francisco the strategy worked well enough that 20,000 people took to the streets—with more refinement and widespread application, who knows what might be possible?

Beware the Professionalization of Social Change

The worst thing that can happen to our movements right now is to settle for too little.

But tragically that is exactly what is happening. We are largely failing to frame the ecological, social, and economic crisis as a symptom of a deeper values crisis and a pathological system. Thus, many of the modest visions of social change being put forward seem incapable of even keeping pace with the accelerating global crisis, let alone providing true alternatives to the doomsday economy.

Too many of our social change resources are getting bogged down in arenas of struggle that can't deliver the systemic shifts we need. Most of the conventional venues for political engagement—legislation, elections, courts, single-issue campaigns, labor fights—have been so coopted by elite rule that it's very difficult to imagine how to use them for strategies that name the system, undermine the control mythology, or articulate values crisis from within their limited parameters.

One of the most telling symptoms of our colonized imaginations has been the limited scope of social change institutions. Most social change resources get directed toward enforcing inadequate regulations, trying to pass watered-down legislation, working to elect mediocre candidates, or to win concessions that don't threaten the corporate order. One of the main reasons that so many social change resources get limited to the regulatory, electoral, and concessionary arenas is the fact that much of social change has become a professionalized industry.



The NGO—nongovernmental organization—a term made popular by the United Nations policy discussion process, has become the most familiar social change institution. These groups are frequently made up of hard-working, underpaid, dedicated people, and NGOs as a group do a great deal of important work. However, we must also acknowledge that generally the explosion of NGOs globally is a loose attempt to patch the holes that neoliberalism has punched in the social safety net. As government cedes its role in public welfare to corporations, even the un lucrative sectors have to be handed off to someone. A recent article in the *Economist* revealingly explains the growth of NGOs as “. . . not a matter of charity but of privatization.”²⁶

My intention is not to fall into the all-too-easy trap of lumping the thousands of different NGOs into one dismissable category but rather to label a disturbing trend, particularly among social-change NGOs. Just as service-oriented NGOs have been tapped to fill the voids left by the state or the market, so have social-change NGOs arisen to streamline the chaotic business of dissent. Let’s call this trend NGOism, the belief—sometimes found among professional “campaigners”—that social change is a highly specialized profession best left to experienced strategists, negotiators, and policy wonks. NGOism is the conceit that intermediary organizations of paid staff, rather than communities organizing themselves into movements, will be enough to save the world.

This very dangerous trend ignores the historic reality that collective struggle and mass movements organized from the bottom up have always been the springboard for true progress and social change. The goal of radical institutions—whether well-funded NGOs or gritty grassroots groups—should be to help build movements to change the world. But NGOism institutionalizes the amnesia of the colonized imagination and presents a major obstacle to moving into the post-issue activism framework. After all, who needs a social movement when you’ve got a six-figure advertising budget and “access” to all the decisionmakers?

A professional NGO is structured exactly like a corporation, down to having an employee payroll and a board of directors. This is not an accident. Just like their for-profit cousins, this structure creates an institutional self-interest that can transform an organization from a catalyst for social change into a self-perpetuating entity. NGOism views change in reference to existing power relations by accepting a set of rules written by the powerful to ensure the status quo. These rules have already been stacked against social change. NGOism represents institutional confusion about the different types of power and encourages overdependence on strategies that speak exclusively to the existing



powers—funding sources, the media, decisionmakers. As a consequence, strategies often get locked into the regulatory and concessionary arenas—focused on “pressure”—and attempt to redirect existing power rather than focusing on confronting illegitimate authority, revealing systemic flaws, and building grassroots power.

The mythology of American politics as populist or democratic is rapidly being undermined by the blatant realities of corporate dominance. As people’s confidence in the facades of popular rule (like voting, lobbying, and the regulatory framework) has waned, more and more campaigns are directly confronting destructive corporations. This is an essential strategy for revealing the decisionmaking power that corporations have usurped, but unfortunately most of these NGO-led efforts to confront individual destructive corporations are failing to articulate a holistic analysis of the system of corporate control.

This is an extremely dangerous failure because in pursuing concessions or attempting to redirect corporate resources we risk making multinational corporations the agents of solving the ecological crisis. This is a flawed strategy since by their very nature corporations are incapable of making the concessions necessary to address the global crisis. There is no decision-maker in the corporate hierarchy with the power to transform the nature of the corporate beast and confront its identity as a profit-making machine. The CEO who has an epiphany about the need to redefine her corporation as a democratic institution that looks beyond the limited fiduciary interests of shareholders will find herself on the wrong side of a century of corporate law. We need to avoid the temptation to accept concessions that legitimize corporate control and obscure the fundamental democracy issues underlying the global crisis.

Too often, political pragmatism is used as an excuse for a lack of vision. Pragmatism without vision is accepting the rules that are stacked against us while vision without pragmatism is fetishizing failure. The question shouldn’t be what can we win in this funding cycle but rather how do we expand the debate to balance short- and long-term goals? Like a healthy ecosystem, our movements need a diversity of strategies. We need to think outside the box and see what new arenas of struggle we can explore.

This is not to say that corporate campaigns and winning concessions is merely “reformist” and therefore not important. The simplistic dichotomy of reform versus revolution often hides the privilege of “radicals” who have the luxury of refusing concessions when it’s not their community or ecosystem that is on the chopping block.

POST-ISSUE ACTIVISM

POST-ISSUE ACTIVISM





Jason Justice

A more important distinction is which direction is the concession moving toward? Is it a concession that releases pressure on the system and thereby legitimizes illegitimate authority? Or is it a concession that teaches people a lesson about their collective power to make change and therefore brings us closer to systemic change?

NGOism creates ripe conditions for going beyond mere ineffectiveness and into outright complicity with the system. Time and time again we've seen social-change NGOs grow to become a part of the establishment and then be used as a tool to marginalize popular dissent by lending legitimacy to the system. Whether it's the World Wildlife Fund giving a green seal of approval to oil companies or the American Cancer Society's downplaying of environmental pollution's role in cancer,²⁷ it's clear that NGOs can become an obstacle to transformative change.

The professionalization of social change requires extensive resources, and it's obvious that NGO agendas can be shaped by their funding needs. Whether reliant on a membership base or institutional funders, NGOs are often forced to build a power base through self-promotion rather than self-analysis. Not only does this dilute their agendas to fit within the political comfort zone of those with resources, it disrupts the essential process of acknowledging mistakes and learning from them. This evolutionary process of collective learning is central to fundamental social change, and



Eric Wagner

Protests against police brutality and the war on Iraq following an April 7, 2003 police attack on demonstrators, longshore workers, and members of the media with rubber, wooden, and plastic bullets, concussion grenades, and motorcycles. The police attacked in response to a community picket to shut down SSA and APL corporations at the Oakland Docks, one of the major arteries for global capital's shipment of goods for the western United States. April 2003.



Eric Wagner

People from community, labor, and antiwar groups reclaim their right to picket and protest one month after the April 7 police attacks. The docks were again shut down, and this time the police backed down and did not interfere. May 12, 2003.



Eric Wagner

to have it derailed by professionalization threatens to limit the depth of the change that we can create.

When a system is fundamentally flawed there is no point in trying to fix it—we need to redesign it. That is the essence of the transformative arena—defining issues, reframing debates, thinking big. We must create the political space to

harness the awareness of the increasingly obvious global crisis into a desire for real change toward a democratic, just, and ecologically sane world.

Our movements must evolve past mere mobilizing and into real transformative organizing. Transformative organizing is more than just making the protest louder and bigger. It's the nuts-and-bolts business of building alternatives on a grassroots level, and creating our own legitimacy to replace the illegitimate institutions of corporate society. Real transformative organizing gives people the skills and analysis they need to ground the struggle to reclaim our planet in both the individual and the structural arenas—the creation of new identities and the transformation of global systems.

It is essential that we don't waste all our energy just throwing ourselves at the machine. Resistance is only one piece of the social change equation. It must be complimented by creation. Movements need institutions that can be the hubs to help sustain our momentum for the long haul. There are definitely NGOs that play this role well, we just have to ensure that NGOism doesn't infect them with limiting definitions of specialization and professionalism.

We have to plant the seeds of the new society within the shell of the old. Exciting work is being done around the concept of *dual-power strategies*. These are strategies that not only confront illegitimate institutions, but simultaneously embody the alternatives, thereby giving people the opportunity to practice self-governance and envision new political realities. Examples of inspiring dual-power strategies are taking place across the world, particularly in Latin America. From indigenous autonomist communities in Mexico to the landless movement in Brazil to Argentina's *autoconvocados* (literally, "the self-convened ones"), peoples' movements are resisting the corporate takeover of their lives by defiantly living the alternatives.²⁷

In the creation of these alternatives—the holistic actions of community transformation that go far beyond any of the limiting boundaries of professionalized social change—we see a vision of direct action at the point of assumption, actions that reveal new possibilities, challenge the assumptions of the corporate monoculture and create infectious, new political spaces.

We can fight the doomsday economy by devoking the apocalypse with visions of a life-affirming future. In doing so we lay claim to a radical's best ally—hope. But our hope must not be based on the naïveté of denial. Rather, our hope must be a signpost, a reminder of the potential of our struggles. We must not position hope as some mythic endpoint of struggle but rather, learn to carry it with us as a blueprint for our daily efforts.

Toward a Politics of Reality

Reality is that which is.

The English word "real" stems from a word which meant regal, of or pertaining to the king.

"Real" in Spanish means royal.

Real property is that which is proper to the king.

Real estate is the estate of the king.

Reality is that which pertains to the one in power; Is that over which he has power, is his domain, his Estate, is proper to him.

The ideal king reigns over everything as far as the Eye can see. His eye. What he cannot see is not Royal, not real.

He sees what is proper to him.

To be real is to be visible to the king.

The king is in his counting house.

—Marilyn Frye, "The Politics of Reality"

Feminist author Marilyn Frye writes about reality from the perspective of a lesbian fighting to "exist" within an oppressive heterosexist culture for which the idea of a woman who is not sexually dependant upon men is unimaginable. Her poem reminds us that reality is constructed, and that those in power get to decide who or what is "real." Or, in the words of the

photo: David Hanks
flyer: justicedesign.com



1980s band disco-industrial My Life with the Thrill Kill Kult: “‘Reality’ is the only word in the English language that should always be used in quotes.”

Frye’s poem uses the etymology of the word *reality* to expose the flawed assumptions that shape the dominant

cultural lens. The king’s counting house is the origin of today’s corporate-driven doomsday economy. A “reality” that has colonized our minds to normalize alienation from nature, conquest, and patriarchal hierarchies. A “reality” based on the censorship of our history of collective struggle that makes us think rugged individualism is the only tactic for resistance.

“Reality” is the lens through which we see the world. If we want to create a different world we’re going to need to create some new lenses. We can begin by understanding that the values that currently underlie the global system didn’t win out because they are time-tested, democratically supported, or even effective. This “reality” is a product of the naked brutality of European colonization and the systematic destruction of the cultural and economic alternatives to our current pathological system.

The struggle to create political space for a truly transformative arena of social change is the fight to build a new collective reality. Our last (or is it first?) line of defense to the spreading consumer monoculture is the struggle to decolonize our minds and magnify the multitude of different “realities” embedded in the planet’s sweeping diversity of cultures, ecosystems, and interdependent life forms.

At the center of these efforts must be the understanding that the ecological operating systems of the biosphere represent an overarching *politics of reality*. If we want to talk about reality in the singular, outside of its conceptual quotation marks, then we must talk about ecological reality—the reality of interdependence, diversity, limits, cycles, and dynamic balance. A politics of reality recognizes that ecology is not merely another single issue to lump onto our list of demands; rather, ecology is the larger context within which all our struggles takes place. A politics of reality is grounded in the understanding that the ecological collapse is the central and most visible contradiction in the global system. It is an implicit



On the one-year anniversary of the shutdown of San Francisco’s financial district, DASW kicks off its Empire versus Democracy (beyond voting) campaign with a protest and nonviolent direct action on March 19, 2004, in conjunction with the global day of action against war on March 20, 2004.

Jason Justice



The Infernal Noise Brigade comes to town for antiwar protests on March 19–20, 2004, San Francisco.

Jason Justice



On the day before the anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, a demonstration took place in Baghdad in tandem with protests around the world against the violence of the occupation on March 19, 2004.

Andrew Stern / www.andrewstern.net

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acknowledgment that the central political project of our era is the rethinking of what it means to be human on planet earth.

We have to confront the cancer and pull the doomsday economy out of its suicidal nosedive. The move toward a politics of reality is the essence of a fight for the future itself. Indian writer and activist Vandana Shiva said it eloquently in her speech at the World Summit on Sustainable Development countersummit in August 2002: “There is only one struggle left, and that is the struggle for survival.”



Infernal Noise Brigade, March 19, 2004, San Francisco.

Jason Justice

Ecology must be a key ingredient in the future of pan-movement politics. But to achieve this, we must ensure that earth-centered values don't get appropriated by white, middle-class messengers and become artificially separated from a comprehensive critique of all forms of oppression. A global ecology movement is already being led by the communities and cultures most impacted by the doomsday economy, from international campesino movements to urban communities resisting toxic poisoning to the last indigenous homelands. Those of us dreaming of more global North counterparts to these earth-centered movements have much to learn from listening to the voices of frontline resistance.

The Western Shoshone people—the most bombed nation on earth who have survived half a century of U.S. nuclear colonialism on their ancestral lands in what is now called Nevada—have mobilized under the banner, “Healing Global Wounds.” This inspiring slogan reminds us that despite the horrors of brutality, empire, and ecological catastrophe the strongest resistance lies in the ability to think big.

In facing the global crisis, the most powerful weapon that we have is our imagination. As we work to escape the oppressive cultural norms and flawed assumptions of the corporate system we must liberate our imagination and articulate our dreams for a life-affirming future. Our actions must embody these new “realities” because even though people might realize they are on the *Titanic* and the iceberg is just ahead, they still need to see the lifeboat in order to jump ship. It is by presenting alternatives that we can help catalyze mass defections from the pathological norms of modern consumer culture.²⁹



Our job is to confront the sickness while articulating the alternatives, both ancient and new. Our true strength lies in the diversity of options presented by earth-centered values, whether we find the alternatives in the wisdom of traditional cultures, local economies, spiritual/community renewal, or ecological redesign. As we decolonize our own revolutionary imagination we will find new political frameworks that name the system and articulate the values crisis. We can base our work in an honest assessment of our own privilege, and a commitment to healing historic wounds. We can imagine a culture defined by diversity that promotes revolutionary optimism over nihilism and embraces collective empowerment over individual coercion. Not only can redefine what is possible, but we must!

We are already winning. Life is stronger than greed. Hope is more powerful than fear. The values crisis is in full swing, and more and more people are turning their back on the pathological values of the doomsday economy. The global immune system is kicking in and giving momentum to our movements for change. Call it an Enlightenment. Call it a Renaissance. Call it a common-sense revolution. The underlying concepts are obvious. As the saying goes—for a person standing on the edge of a cliff, progress must be defined as a step backward.

Imagination conjures change. First we dream it, then we speak it, then we struggle to build it. But without the dreams, without our decolonized imaginations, our efforts to name and transform the system will not succeed in time.

I take inspiration from a slogan spray-painted on the walls of Paris during the springtime uprising of 1968: “Be realistic. Demand the Impossible!” The slogan is more timely now than ever because the king can’t stay in his counting house forever. And then it will be our turn. . . .

These ideas are works in progress. Feedback of all sorts (including scathing criticism) is welcome. Many of the concepts discussed in this essay have been translated into training and strategy tools through the work of the smartMeme Strategy and Training Project. Anyone interested in expanding upon or collaborating to implement some of these strategies are encouraged to contact the author at patrick@smartmeme.com or check out www.smartmeme.com. Join the fun! Start your own laboratory of resistance!



APPENDIX: a pragmatic dreamer’s glossary
by the smartMeme Strategy and Training Project

The smartMeme Project is an emerging network of thinkers, trainers, writers, organizers, and earth-centered radicals who are exploring efforts to combine grassroots movement building with tools to inject new ideas into popular culture. To join in the fun and help expand and apply these concepts, check out the evolution at: www.smartmeme.com.

ABCNNBCBS — the increasingly blurred brand names for the same narrow stream of U.S. corporate-filtered mass media. This is the delivery system for the advertising product that giant media corporations sell to the general public. This process used to occur primarily through overt advertising. Increasingly, however, it has become a complex web of cross-marketing, branding, and self-promotion among different tentacles of the same media empires.

advertising — the manipulation of collective desire for commercial interests. Over the last twenty years as it has grown to nearly a \$200 billion industry it has become the propaganda shell and dream life of modern consumer culture. (See control mythology)

articulating values crisis — a strategy in which radicals lay claim to common-sense values and expose the fact that the system is out of alignment with those values.

controlMeme — a meme used to marginalize, coopt, or limit the scale of social change ideas by institutionalizing a status-quo bias into popular perception of events. The type of memes that RAND Corporation analysts and Pentagon information warfare experts spend countless hours and millions of dollars designing.

control mythology — the web of stories, symbols, and ideas that defines the dominant culture’s sense of normal, limits our ability to imagine social change, and makes people think the system is unchangeable.

confirmatory bias — psychological concept proven in studies which show that people are more likely to accept/believe new information if it sounds like something they already believe.



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defector syndrome — the tendency of radicals to self-marginalize by exhibiting their dissent in such a way that it only speaks to those who already share their beliefs.

direct action at the point(s) of assumption — actions whose goal is to reframe issues and create new political space by targeting underlying assumptions.

earth-centered — a political perspective within which people define themselves and their actions in the context of the planet’s ecological operating systems, biological/cultural diversity, and ongoing efforts to recenter human society within the earth’s natural limits/cycles. An emerging term used to draw links and build alliances between ecological identity politics, land-based struggles, indigenous resistance, earth spirituality, agrarian folk wisdom, and visions of sustainable, ecologically sane societies both past and future. A politicized acceptance of the sacredness of living systems.

global crisis — the present time in the history of planet earth, characterized by the systematic undermining of the planet’s life support systems through industrial extraction, unlimited growth, the commodification of all life, and emergence of global corporate rule. Symptoms include: accelerating loss of biological and cultural diversity, the deterioration of all ecosystems, the destabilization of global ecology (climate change, soil erosion, biocontamination, etc.), growing disparities between rich and poor, increased militarization, ongoing patterns of racism, classism, and sexism, and the spread of consumer monoculture. Part of the endgame of 200 years of industrial capitalism, 500 years of white supremacist colonization, and 10,000 years of patriarchal domination.

image event — an experience, event, or action that operates as a delivery system for smartMemes by creating new associations and meanings.

meme — (pronounced meem) a unit of self-replicating cultural transmission (i.e., ideas, slogans, melodies, symbols) that spreads virally from brain to brain. Word coined by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976 from a Greek root meaning “to imitate,” to draw the analogy with “gene.” “A contagious information pattern” — Glenn Grant.

movement — a critical mass of people who share ideas, take collective action, and build alternative institutions to create social change.



points of intervention — a place in a system, be it a physical system or a conceptual system (ideology, cultural assumption, etc.) where action can be taken to effectively interrupt the system. Examples include **point of production** (factory), **point of destruction** (logging road), **point of consumption** (chain store), **point of decision** (corporate HQ), **point of assumption** (culture/mythology), and **point of potential** (actions which make alternatives real).

political space — created by the ability of an oppositional idea or critique of the dominant order to manifest itself and open up new revolutionary possibilities. The extent to which our imaginations are colonized is the extent to which we lack political space and can’t implement or even suggest new political ideas.

psychic break — the process or moment where people realize that the system is out of alignment with their values.

psycho-geography — the intersection of physical landscape with cultural and symbolic landscapes. A framework for finding targets for direct action at the point of assumption.

radical — a person committed to fundamental social change who believes we must address the roots of the problem rather than just the symptoms.

smartMeme — a designer meme that injects new infectious ideas into popular culture, contests established meaning (controlMemes), and facilitates popular rethinking of assumptions.

subverter — an effective radical who works within the logic of the dominant culture to foster dissent, mobilize resistance, and make fundamental social change imaginable.

tipping point — epidemiological term used to describe the point when a disease becomes an epidemic. Popularized by author Malcolm Gladwell to apply to the point where a new idea hits a critical mass of popular acceptance.

values — the social principles, goals, or standards held or accepted by an individual, group, or society. The moral codes that structure people’s deepest held beliefs.

values crisis — the disconnect between common-sense values (justice, equality, democracy, ecological literacy) and the pathological values that underlie the global corporate system.



values shift — a recognition that the global crisis is the expression of pathological values that we need to change. An area of extreme difficulty to organize since people's values are very ingrained and the effective language to communicate in the values arena is often appropriated by powerful reactionary traditions and institutions (government, organized religion, patriarchal family, etc.).

Xerxes — ancient Persian emperor who, despite having the world's largest military force, overextended himself and was defeated by the unity and creativity of the Greeks, starting a long decline that led to the end of Persian dominance. A conceptual archetype for the fall of all empires. America take note.

Notes

- ¹ Merely, Michael, unpublished monograph "The Difficult Position of Being an Anti-Statist within the Context of Northern Ireland," 2002, available upon request from m.reinsborough@queens-belfast.ac.uk.
- ² The sixth mass extinction has become a widely accepted term within scientific circles to describe the current period of extinction. Dr. Niles Eldredge, the curator in chief of the permanent exhibition "Hall of Biodiversity" at the American Museum of Natural History, has an article "The Sixth Extinction" available at www.amnh.org, June 2001. Also see Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson's work.
- ³ Data taken from BIS, 1999. *Central Bank Survey of Foreign Exchange and Derivatives Market Activity, 1998* (Basle: Bank for International Settlements). Thanks to Ricardo Bayon for his research into private capital flows for the Rainforest Action Network, "Citigroup and the Environment," February 2000.
- ⁴ IMF, *World Economic Outlook* – October 1999. Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 1999.
- ⁵ Ellwood, Wayne, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization*. (New Internationalist Publications, 2001).
- ⁶ Stats taken from *The Economist* (October 23, 1999) quoted in Ricardo Bayon's report for the Rainforest Action Network "Citigroup and the Environment," February 2000.



⁷ Canadian philosopher John McMurtry has probably done the most to articulate this analysis in his (cumbersome but useful) book *The Cancer Stage of Capitalism* (Pluto Press 1999).

⁸ Any analysis of the corporate takeover of the American legal system is indebted to the work of the Program on Corporations Law and Democracy. Info and materials can be found at www.poclاد.org. Particularly noteworthy is their recent compilation, *Defying Corporations, Defining Democracy: A Book of History and Strategy*, edited by Dean Ritz and published by APEX 2001. Likewise, the 1993 pamphlet by Richard Grossman and Frank Adams, *Taking Care of Business: Citizenship and the Charter of Incorporation*, remains a classic. For a thorough discussion of the 1886 ruling and corporate personhood, see *Santa Clara Blues: Corporate Personhood versus Democracy* by William Meyers. The pamphlet can be ordered from www.iiipublishing.com.

⁹ Facts cited in the *TV Free American* newsletter of the TV Turnoff Network, which has extensive facts and figures about television addiction. See www.tvturnoff.org

¹⁰ The statistic comes from Jean Kilbourne's research into advertising and gender roles. Kilbourne is known for her award-winning documentaries *Killing Us Softly*, *Slim Hopes*, and *Pack of Lies*. Her latest book is *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel*, (Touchstone, 2000).

¹¹ Exact stat is over 800 million people living in hunger, 770 million in the global South or "developing world". Food Insecurity in the World 2001. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Report is available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x8200e/x8200e00.htm>.

¹² Bell, James John, *The Last Wizards Book of Green Shadows: The Destruction and Construction of Ideas in Popular Consciousness*, 2002. Out of Order Books, www.lastwizards.com.

¹³ Rey, Paul, and Sherry Ruth Anderson, *The Cultural Creatives* (New York: Harmony Books, 2000): www.culturalcreatives.org.

¹⁴ Rey, Paul, "The New Political Compass," prepublication manuscript, 2002.

¹⁵ Moyer, Bill, *Doing Democracy: The MAP Model for Organizing Social Movements* (New Society Publishers, 2001). Bill—your



work inspired many and continues to nurture new generations of activists. R.I.P.

- ¹⁶ The contrast of money values versus life values is widely used. For a particularly eloquent articulation of it check out the books or lectures of Global Exchange cofounder Kevin Danaher. Most are available through www.globalexchange.org. Also useful is the work of David Korten, particularly *The Post-Corporate World: Life After Capitalism* (Kumarian Press, 1999).
- ¹⁷ Meme (pronounced meem) describes a building block of replicable meaning, a unit of cultural information with the ability to spread virally from brain to brain (such as ideas, slogans, melodies, symbols). Word coined by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in analogy with “gene” from a Greek root meaning “to imitate.” See *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford University Press, 1976). “A contagious information pattern” — Glenn Grant.
- ¹⁸ The term “meme warriors” was coined by Kalle Lasn in *Adbusters Magazine* and is expounded upon in his book *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America’s Suicidal Consumer Binge and Why We Must* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000). Despite its militarist connotations, the term is not intended to be gender neutral.
- ²⁰ The phrase “energy sovereignty” represents the simple but radical concept that local communities should have the right to decide how to meet their own energy needs. Thus “development” decisions around energy are placed in the context of local communities and ecosystems rather than the macroscale context of multinational corporations, privatized utilities, and global economic infrastructure. The term comes from Oilwatch, an international network of 120 ecological, human rights, religious organizations and local communities that support resistance against oil and gas activities from a southern countries perspective, (www.oilwatch.org.net.ec). Also see U.S.–based organizations Project Underground, (www.moles.org) and CorpWatch, (www.corpwatch.org).
- ²⁰ Martha F. Lee, *Earth First! Environmental Apocalypse*, (Syracuse University Press, 1995).
- ²¹ The Zapatista uprising is one of the most documented revolutionary movements in recent history: there is no shortage of excellent coverage of their inspiring actions and important analysis. One of most the accessible and poetic of the compilations of Zapatista communiqués and the writings of Marcos is *Our Word Is Our Weapon*, edited by Juana Ponce de Leon (Seven Stories Press, 2000).

- ²² A spectacular account is recorded by John Jordan and Jennifer Whitney in their newsprint zine “*Que Se Vayan Todos : Argentina’s Popular Uprising*,” May 2002. More info at www.weareeverywhere.org.
- ²³ Bell, *The Last Wizard’s Book*.
- ²⁴ Lasn, *Culture Jam*.
- ²⁵ Many of these strategies around “image events” and applying the elements of narrative structure to “telling the future” have been further developed by the smartMeme strategy and training project in their essays “The Battle of the Story” and “The Next Environmental Movement.” These essays and an ongoing forum for activists to explore and apply these ideas is available at www.smartmeme.com.
- ²⁶ Quoted in James Davis, “This Is What Bureaucracy Looks Like,” in *The Battle of Seattle: The New Challenge to Capitalist Globalization*, ed. Eddie Yuen, George Katsiaticas, and Daniel Burton Rose (Soft Skull Press, 2002). The article is also a useful and relevant examination of NGOs.
- ²⁷ The modern cancer epidemic has spawned a parasitic industry of drug companies that sell expensive treatment drugs, many of whom also produce carcinogenic chemicals. Connected to many of these hypocritical corporations are various high-profile, big-budget, nonprofit organizations that help keep public attention focused on expensive treatments (the mythic “cure”) rather than the cause. For more information on the “Cancer Industry” see activist organizations like Breast Cancer Action (www.bcaction.org) and environmental justice resources like the Environmental Research Foundation (www.rachels.org).
- ²⁸ For comprehensive writings, discussions, and organizing around the dual power concept, check out www.dualpower.net.
- ²⁹ I am indebted to my conversations with Kevin Danaher for the lifeboat metaphor.

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David Hanks

March against U.S. war on Afghanistan and post-9/11 racist attacks, 2002.