

And they die. And what emerges from these cycles are complex organisms, systems, movements, societies.

Nothing is wasted, or a failure. Emergence is a system that makes use of everything in the interactive process. It's all data.

Octavia Butler said, "Civilization is to groups what intelligence is to individuals. It is a means of combining the intelligence of many to achieve ongoing group adaptation."

She also said, "All that you touch you change / all that you change, changes you." We are constantly impacting and changing our civilization—each other, ourselves, intimates, strangers. And we are working to transform a world that is, by its very nature, in a constant state of change.

Janine Benyus, a student of biomimicry, says: Nature/Life would always "create conditions conducive to life." She tells of a radical fringe of scientists who are realizing that natural selection isn't individual but mutual—that species survive only if they learn to be in community.

How can we, future ancestors, align ourselves with the most resilient practices of emergence as a species?

Many of us have been socialized to understand that constant growth, violent competition, and critical mass are the ways to create change. But emergence shows us that adaptation and evolution depend more upon critical, deep, and authentic connections, a thread that can be tugged for support and resilience. The quality of connection between the nodes in the patterns.

Dare I say love.

And we know how to connect—we long for it.

On Fire

NAOMI KLEIN

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

Well, none of those emotional pleas proved at all persuasive, at least not to the politicians and their corporate underwriters who could have taken bold action to stop the climate disruption we are all living through today. Instead, since those government meetings began in 1988, global carbon dioxide emissions have risen by well over 40 percent, and they continue to rise. The planet has warmed by about 1 degree Celsius since we began burning coal on an industrial scale, and average temperatures are on track to rise by as much as four times that amount before the century is up; the last time there was this much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, humans didn't exist. *

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

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

They know what they think of Donald Trump in the United States and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Scott Morrison in Australia and all

the other leaders who torch the planet with defiant glee while denying science so basic that these kids could grasp it easily at age eight. Their verdict is just as damning, if not more so, for the leaders who deliver passionate and moving speeches about the imperative to respect the Paris Climate Agreement and “make the planet great again” (France’s Emmanuel Macron, Canada’s Justin Trudeau, and so many others) but who then shower subsidies, handouts, and licenses on the fossil fuel and agribusiness giants driving ecological breakdown.

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

This is the power of the youth climate movement. Unlike so many adults in positions of authority, they have not yet been trained to mask the unfathomable stakes of our moment in the language of bureaucracy and overcomplexity. They understand that they are fighting for the fundamental right to live full lives—lives in which they are not, as fourteen-year-old climate striker Alexandria Villaseñor puts it, “running from disasters.”

★ For the first global youth strike, on March 15, 2019, organizers estimate there were nearly 2,100 strikes in 125 countries, with 1.6 million young people participating. That’s quite an achievement for a movement that began just eight months earlier with a single fifteen-year-old girl in Stockholm, Sweden, Greta Thunberg.

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

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

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

As a result, when most of us look around for social confirmation of what our hearts and heads are telling us about climate disruption, we are confronted with all kinds of contradictory signals, telling us instead not to worry, that it’s an exaggeration, that there are countless more important problems, countless shinier objects to focus on, that we’ll never make a difference anyway, and so on. And it most certainly doesn’t help that we are trying to navigate this civilizational crisis at a moment when some of the most brilliant minds of our time are devoting vast energies to figuring out ever-more-ingenuous tools to keep us running around in digital circles in search of the next dopamine hit.

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

“I think in many ways that we autistic are the normal ones, and the rest of the people are pretty strange,” Thunberg has said, adding that it helps not to be easily distracted or reassured by rationalizations. “Because if the emissions have to stop, then we must stop the emissions. To me that is black or white. There are no gray areas when it comes to survival. Either we go on as a civilization or we don’t. We have to change.” Living with autism is anything but easy—for most

people, it “is an endless fight against schools, workplaces and bullies. But under the right circumstances, given the right adjustments it can be a superpower.”

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

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

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

As deep as our crisis runs, something equally deep is also shifting, and with a speed that startles me. As I write these words, it is not only our planet that is on fire. So are social movements rising up to declare, from below, a people’s emergency. In addition to the wildfire of student strikes, we have seen the rise of Extinction Rebellion, which exploded onto the scene and kicked off a wave of nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience, including a mass shutdown of large parts of central London. Extinction Rebellion is calling on governments to treat climate change as an emergency, to rapidly transition to 100 percent renewable energy in line with climate science, and to democratically develop a plan for how to implement that transition through citizens’ assemblies. Within days of its most dramatic actions in April 2019, Wales and Scotland both declared a state of climate

emergency, and the British parliament, under pressure from opposition parties, quickly followed suit.

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

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

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

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

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

But doing that would be extremely difficult. According to the *

World Meteorological Organization, we are on a path to warming the world by 3 to 5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. Turning our economic ship around in time to keep the warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius would require, the IPCC authors found, cutting global emissions approximately in half by 2030 and getting to net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. Not just in one country but in every major economy. And because carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has already dramatically surpassed safe levels, it would also require drawing a great deal of that down, whether through unproven and expensive carbon capture technologies or the old-fashioned ways: restoring forests and other ecosystems, and farming in ways that regenerate soil.

Pulling off this high-speed pollution phaseout, the report establishes, is not possible with singular technocratic approaches like carbon taxes, though those tools must play a part. Rather, it requires deliberately and immediately changing how our societies produce energy, how we grow our food, how we move ourselves around, and how our buildings are constructed. What is needed, the report's summary states in its first sentence, is "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society."

This was not the first terrifying climate report by any means, nor the first unequivocal call from respected scientists for radical emissions reduction. My bookshelves are crowded with these findings. But like Greta Thunberg's speeches, the starkness of the IPCC's call for root-and-branch societal change, and the shortness of the time line it laid out for pulling it off, focused the public mind like nothing before.

It was against this backdrop that 2019's cascade of large and militant climate mobilizations unfolded. Again and again at the strikes and protests, we heard the words "We have only twelve years." Thanks to the IPCC's unequivocal clarity, as well as direct and repeated experience with unprecedented weather, our conceptualization of this crisis is shifting. Many more people are beginning to grasp that the fight is not for some abstraction called "the Earth." We are fighting for our lives.

As powerful a motivator as the IPCC report has proven to be, perhaps an even more important factor has to do with the calls coming from many different quarters in the United States and around the world for

governments to respond to the climate crisis with a sweeping Green New Deal. The idea is a simple one: In the process of transforming the infrastructure of our societies at the speed and scale that scientists have called for, humanity has a once-in-a-century chance to fix an economic model that is failing the majority of people on multiple fronts—because the factors that are destroying our planet are also destroying people's quality of life in many other ways, from wage stagnation to gaping inequalities to crumbling services to the breakdown of any semblance of social cohesion. Challenging these underlying forces is an opportunity to solve several interlocking crises at once.

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

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

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

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

Those of us who advocate for this kind of transformative platform are sometimes accused of using the climate crisis to advance a socialist or anticapitalist agenda that predates our focus on the climate crisis. My response is a simple one. For my entire adult life, I have been involved in movements confronting the myriad ways that our current economic systems grind up people's lives and landscapes in the ruthless pursuit of profit. My first book, *No Logo*, published in 2000, documented the human and ecological costs of corporate globalization, from the sweatshops of Indonesia to the oil fields of the Niger Delta. I have seen teenage girls treated like machines to make our machines and seen mountains and forests turned to trash heaps to get at the oil, coal, and metals beneath.

The painful, even lethal impacts of these practices were impossible to deny; it was simply argued that they were the necessary costs of a system that was creating so much wealth that the benefits would eventually trickle down to improve the lives of nearly everyone on the planet. What has happened instead is that the indifference to life that was expressed in the exploitation of individual workers on factory floors and in the decimation of individual mountains and rivers has trickled up to swallow our entire planet, turning fertile lands into salt flats, beautiful islands into rubble, and draining once vibrant reefs of their life and color.

I freely admit that I do not see the climate crisis as separable from the more localized market-generated crises that I have documented over the years; what is different is the scale and scope of the tragedy, with humanity's one and only home now hanging in the balance. I have always had a tremendous sense of urgency about the need to shift to a dramatically more humane economic model. But there is a different quality to that urgency now because it just so happens that

we are all alive at the last possible moment when changing course can mean saving lives on a truly unimaginable scale.

None of this means that every climate policy must dismantle capitalism or else it should be dismissed (as some critics have absurdly claimed)—we need every action possible to bring down emissions, and we need them now. But it does mean, as the IPCC has so forcefully confirmed, that we will not get the job done unless we are willing to embrace systemic economic and social change.

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

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

The message coming from the school strikes is that a great many young people are ready for this kind of deep change. They know all too well that the sixth mass extinction is not the only crisis they have inherited. They are also growing up in the rubble of market euphoria, in which the dreams of endlessly rising living standards have given way to rampant austerity and economic insecurity. And technoutopianism, which imagined a frictionless future of limitless connec-

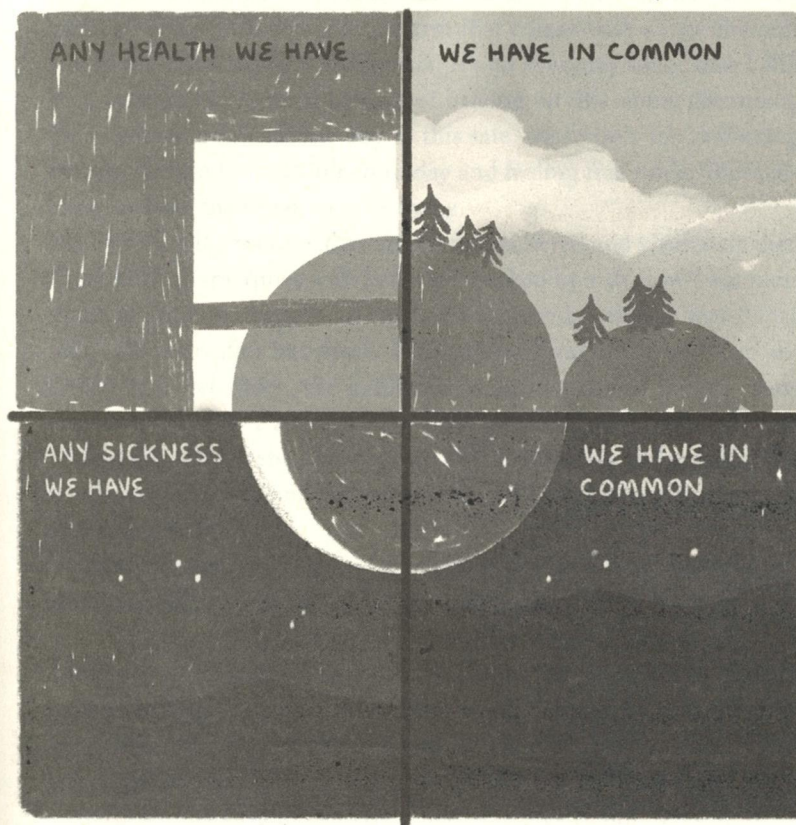
tion and community, has morphed into addiction to the algorithms of envy, relentless corporate surveillance, and spiraling online misogyny and White supremacy.

“Once you have done your homework,” Greta Thunberg says, “you realize that we need new politics. We need a new economics, where everything is based on our rapidly declining and extremely limited carbon budget. But that is not enough. We need a whole new way of thinking. . . . We must stop competing with each other. We need to start cooperating and sharing the remaining resources of this planet in a fair way.”

Because our house is on fire, and this should come as no surprise. Built on false promises, discounted futures, and sacrificial people, it was rigged to blow from the start. It’s too late to save all our stuff, but we can still save one another and a great many other species too. Let’s put out the flames and build something different in its place. Something a little less ornate, but with room for all those who need shelter and care.

Let’s forge a Global Green New Deal—for everyone this time.

2. ADVOCATE



MADELEINE JUBILEE SAITO