

Introduction

We need much more than a political revolution; we also need a moral, cultural, and spiritual revolution—an awakening to the dignity and value of each and every one of us no matter who we are, where we came from, or what we've done. . . . It is this revolutionary spirit—a revolutionary love for all people and for life itself—that will ultimately determine our collective fate.

Michelle Alexander

We earthlings need to build a fundamental change of consciousness in ourselves and in every part of our national and global society, in order to achieve the economic and political changes necessary to prevent the destruction of the life support system of Earth; to end global and domestic poverty and wealth inequality; to defeat racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of xenophobia; to protect human rights; to achieve social, economic, and environmental justice; and to achieve lasting global peace. This new consciousness is possible, and can emerge through embracing revolutionary love, the struggle for the caring society, and a new bottom line in all our economic, political, legal, educational, and cultural institutions. This manifesto is written to show you how this can happen and how you can help make it possible.

Liberal and progressive movements need to move beyond a focus on economic entitlements and political rights to embrace a new discourse of love,

kindness, generosity, and awe. This is not some New Agey “smile and be nice” formula or a “let’s get into self-transformation before we change society” kind of thinking. I am calling for both our American and global societies to embrace a new bottom line so that every economic, political, societal, and cultural institution is considered efficient, rational, and/or productive—not according to the old bottom line of how much these institutions maximize money, power, or ego but rather how much they maximize love and generosity, kindness and forgiveness, ethical and environmentally sustainable behavior, social and economic justice. This new bottom line seeks to enhance our capacity to transcend a narrow utilitarian or instrumental way of viewing human beings and nature, so that we respond to other people as embodiments of the sacred instead of thinking of them primarily in terms of how much they can serve our interests, and also so that we respond to nature not solely as a resource for human needs but rather through awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the beauty and grandeur of this universe.

I call this new consciousness revolutionary love, and its goal is to create the Caring Society—Caring for Each Other and Caring for the Earth. The vehicle to create this new consciousness we will call the Love and Justice movement (and eventually, the Love and Justice Party).

The revolutionary possibility of love is the kind of love that breaks through those distortions of consciousness that make it difficult to implement a rational environmental policy or to end the many forms of oppression that permeate our world. To really embrace revolutionary love requires us to develop a strategy way beyond anything currently being given serious attention in the media, the political parties, and even many of the social change movements. And it requires us to move beyond what seems realistic in terms of the contemporary frame of discourse. Yet there is no alternative if we are to solve the environmental crisis and prevent our society in the coming decades from moving further and further into reactionary nationalism and repression of our humanity. We need a global mobilization of billions of

people to solve the problem, and this manifesto outlines the first steps for making possible such a mobilization.

To understand the urgency, let's consider our current environmental crisis.

In 1992, thousands of scientists issued a collective statement warning of the impending dangers to the life support systems of planet Earth. Twenty-five years later, in December 2017, 15,364 scientists from 184 countries signed a new statement, which reads in part:

Since 1992, with the exception of stabilizing the stratospheric ozone layer, humanity has failed to make sufficient progress in generally solving these foreseen environmental challenges, and alarmingly, most of them are getting far worse. Especially troubling is the current trajectory of potentially catastrophic climate change due to rising GHGs [greenhouse gases] from burning fossil fuels and agricultural production—particularly from farming ruminants for meat consumption. Moreover, we have unleashed a mass extinction event, the sixth in roughly 540 million years, wherein many current life forms could be annihilated or at least committed to extinction by the end of this century.

Humanity is now being given a second notice. We are jeopardizing our future by not reining in our intense but geographically and demographically uneven material consumption and by not perceiving continued rapid population growth as a primary driver behind many ecological and even societal threats. By failing to adequately limit population growth, reassess the role of an economy rooted in growth, reduce greenhouse gases, incentivize renewable energy, protect habitat, restore ecosystems, curb pollution, halt defaunation, and constrain invasive alien species, humanity is not taking the urgent steps needed to safeguard our imperiled biosphere.¹

And in October 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a new study showing that climate change is happening at a faster rate than previously anticipated. If it continues at the current rate, there will be disastrous consequences for much of the world's

population.² Despite denials from U.S. President Donald Trump, his administration's Global Change Research Program issued a statement in November 2018 affirming that climate change was accelerating. "Climate change threatens the health and well-being of the American people by causing increasing extreme weather, changes to air quality, the spread of new diseases by insects and pests, and changes to the availability of food and water," said the report. "Human health and safety, our quality of life, and the rate of economic growth in communities across the U.S. are increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change." Trump responded by saying he simply didn't believe this report. But rational people do!

To implement the changes scientists say are needed would require an overall transformation of domestic and global economic arrangements. It would require the elimination of many products as well as the factories producing them, a fair distribution of wealth, the overhaul of our transportation and energy systems, a dramatic reduction in the production of unnecessary consumer goods, the rejection of the notion that "growth" of production is in itself a societal good, the curtailment of military expenditures and armament production, and the dedication of trillions of dollars to repairing the damage already done to our planet. In short, the human race would have to find ways to cooperate in dealing with the number one problem facing us all: survival of the life support system of Earth.

In this context, growing numbers of people feel powerless and in despair about the future—feelings reflected in higher rates of suicide and lower rates of childbirth. What they intuit is that a global struggle among competing national and international economic imperialist groupings flourishes without any effective counterforce. Corporate power needs to be replaced by people power, but that cannot happen until money is removed from politics. And so far in the United States, social justice and environmental movements have been too limited in their focus and have failed to explicitly endorse the goals scientists tell us are necessary.

Even more narrowly envisioned goals for short-term steps are likely to be frustrated. *Tikkun* magazine and the Network of Spiritual Progressives have joined with many other groups to support a Green New Deal proposed to Congress by the courageous Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the House, Ed Markey in the Senate, and sixty-five other Congressional sponsors. The January 10, 2019, letter to Congress from 626 organizations describes the following vision for a Green New Deal:

Halt all fossil fuel leasing, phase out all fossil fuel extraction, and end fossil fuel and other dirty energy subsidies. The science is clear that fossil fuels must be kept in the ground. Pursuing new fossil fuel projects at this moment in history is folly. Most immediately, the federal government must stop selling off or leasing publicly owned lands, water, and mineral rights for development to fossil fuel producers. The government must also stop approving fossil fuel power plants and infrastructure projects. We must reverse recent legislation that ended the 40-year ban on the export of crude oil, end the export of all other fossil fuels, and overhaul relevant statutes that govern fossil fuel extraction in order to pursue a managed decline of fossil fuel production. Further, the federal government must immediately end the massive, irrational subsidies and other financial support that fossil fuel and other dirty energy companies (such as nuclear, waste incineration, and biomass energy) continue to receive both domestically and overseas.

Transition power generation to 100% renewable energy. As the United States shifts away from fossil fuels, we must simultaneously ramp up energy efficiency and transition to clean, renewable energy to power the nation's economy where, in addition to excluding fossil fuels, any definition of renewable energy must also exclude all combustion-based power generation, nuclear, biomass energy, large scale hydro and waste-to-energy technologies. To achieve this, the United States must shift to 100 percent renewable power generation by 2035 or earlier. This shift will necessitate upgrading our electricity grid to be smart, efficient, and decentralized, with the ability to incorporate battery storage and distributed energy systems that are democratically governed. In addition, Congress must bring the outdated regulation of electricity into the twenty-first century, encouraging public and

community ownership over power infrastructure and electricity choice, as well as permitting distributed energy sources, including rooftop and community solar programs to supply the grid.

Expand public transportation and phase out fossil fuel vehicles. As the transition away from fossil fuels occurs, our transportation system must also undergo 100 percent decarbonization. To accomplish a fossil-fuel-free reality, Congress must require and fund greater investment in renewable-energy-powered public transportation that serves the people who need it most. The United States must also phase out the sale of automobiles and trucks with internal fossil fuel combustion engines as quickly as possible and phase out all existing fossil fuel mobile sources by 2040 or earlier. Federal credits for electric vehicles must be expanded.

Harness the full power of the Clean Air Act. The Clean Air Act provides powerful tools that have proven successful in protecting the air we breathe and reducing greenhouse pollution. It can also serve as an important backstop to ensure climate targets are met. Congress should harness the full power of the statute by setting strict deadlines and providing adequate funding for EPA to carry out all its duties under all applicable sections of the Act, including implementing greenhouse pollution reduction requirements for cars, trucks, aircraft, ships, smokestacks and other sources, as well as a science-based national pollution cap. The Act has successfully reduced many air pollutants and can do the same for greenhouse pollution.

Ensure a Just Transition led by impacted communities and workers. In effectuating this energy transformation, it is critical to prioritize support for communities who have historically been harmed first and most by the dirty energy economy and workers in the energy sector and related industries. We support a comprehensive economic plan to drive job growth and invest in a new green economy that is designed, built and governed by communities and workers. Building new energy, waste, transportation, and housing infrastructure designed to serve climate resilience and human needs; retrofitting millions of buildings to conserve energy and other resources; and actively restoring natural ecosystems to protect communities from climate change are but a few ways to build a sustainable, low carbon economy where no one is left behind during this change.

Uphold Indigenous rights. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) must be upheld and implemented, along with treaties, instruments and decisions of international law that recognize that Indigenous Peoples have the right to give “free, prior and informed consent” to legislation and development of their lands, territories and/or natural resources, cultural properties and heritage, and other interests, and to receive remedies of losses and damages of property taken without consent.

Further, we will vigorously oppose any legislation that: (1) rolls back existing environmental, health, and other protections, (2) protects fossil fuel and other dirty energy polluters from liability, or (3) promotes corporate schemes that place profits over community burdens and benefits, including market-based mechanisms and technology options such as carbon and emissions trading and offsets, carbon capture and storage, nuclear power, waste-to-energy, and biomass energy. Fossil fuel companies should pay their fair share for damages caused by climate change, rather than shifting those costs to taxpayers.

Medea Benjamin and the Code Pink movement that she helped lead for many years is encouraging climate activists to add the following stipulations to the Green New Deal: a major transition away from the environmental destruction of war and war preparations, including the closure of most U.S. military bases abroad and within the United States and the thorough cleanup of the land and water in those locations.

All these programs make a great deal of sense and most are likely to be blocked on the national level—yet they fall short of the more dramatic changes I outline in the second part of this book. Even forceful local initiatives are often blocked by the disproportionate power of the fossil fuel industries. The *New York Times* reported on one such defeat in the 2018 midterm election:

Faced with what they saw as an existential threat to their businesses, BP, Valero, Phillips 66, the Koch brothers and other members of the fossil fuel fraternity dumped more than \$30 million into Washington State to crush a

ballot initiative that would have imposed the first taxes in the nation on carbon emissions. Backers of the proposal hoped it would serve as a template for similar action elsewhere and perhaps for the country as a whole. But the theoretical elegance of a carbon tax, which most economists and scientists believe is the surest way to control emissions on a broad scale, was no match even in reliably Democratic Washington for relentless fearmongering about job losses, higher electricity bills and more expensive gasoline.³

WHY WE NEED A NEW KIND OF REVOLUTION

Why have decades of Left activism failed to produce the kind of world we seek, and know we need?⁴ Liberal and progressive strategists and social theorists often mention the following reasons.

Failure to Understand Basic Needs

In *Listen, Liberal*, Thomas Frank contends that because Democrats are loyal to what he and others call “the professional class”—who often are in the top 20 percent of wealth holders—they are unable to seriously address income inequality or understand the struggles the bottom 80 percent have in meeting their basic needs.⁵ As a result, the rest of society perceives *them* as “the elites”—although most Democrats do not perceive themselves as elite and are astounded that others see them that way. Yes, this is part of the problem.

Inept Funding Strategies

The Right has more money to spend on politics and institutions and the Left can't compete financially. Many progressives argue that money controls American politics. And, for decades, the Right has successfully financed candidates, educational institutions, religious organizations, media companies, and research and policy institutes. The Left often complains that they just can't match that kind of strategic investment. I want to challenge that notion. Because the difference here is not who has money: there are billionaires on the Left and the Right. Rather, it has more to do with how the money is spent.

Right-wing funders see the importance of spreading their worldview, so they tend to give more money to educational, media, and policy institutions that unashamedly promote that worldview. Left-wing funders are too often narrowly pragmatic, so they insist that the community organizing projects and national organizations they fund be issue-, rather than worldview-, oriented, and that they achieve measurable results within relatively short periods of time. Thus, the Right has funded a wide variety of explicitly Christian colleges that unashamedly teach students a right-wing version of Christianity far removed from the wisdom of Jesus, instilling in them capitalist values as if they were religious values; while leftist alternative colleges, such as the now defunct New College of California in San Francisco, and Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, as well as alternative think tanks, have failed or been forced to severely curtail their programs for lack of funding. True, many liberal colleges have added classes that teach the history of African Americans and offer majors in women's studies and other identity-based curricula. These, however, are not enough to teach a worldview that contradicts the key tenets of capitalist society to which most students have been subjected for most of their lives—hyper-consumerism, looking out for number one, and making it economically. And while some liberal colleges may have mission statements and invite graduation speakers who articulate a vision of the good society, most would be shocked at the idea that they should promote a coherent idealistic worldview, much less one that challenged the core values of the competitive marketplace, and indeed the oversight accrediting institutions would forbid it. Without ever being exposed to an alternative ethical and political worldview that challenges the logic of the competitive and “me-first” logic of global capitalism, and having no idea of how they could make a living serving others, students increasingly have moved away from humanities and much of the social sciences toward fields like economics, business, computers, and technology-related studies or science because the culture in which they've grown up tends to see education

as valuable primarily to the extent that it helps students get the skills or connections that will help them be successful in the marketplace. Liberal funders have rarely sought to create colleges that would embed in their curricula and through the people they hire a systematic challenge to the capitalist system and its notion of the old bottom line and its portrayal of what is or is not “realistic.”

Campaigning on the Wrong Messages

Meanwhile, if you ask many liberals or progressives why many middle income people vote against their rational material self-interest by supporting right-wing candidates, they likely will respond that it’s because those people are racist, sexist, homophobic, Islamophobic, xenophobic, or anti-Semitic. My response: clearly racism and sexism play major roles in how some people vote. But it’s also true that a majority of voters gave their votes to Barack Hussein Obama in 2008 and 2012, and to Hillary Clinton in 2016. Obama and Hillary Clinton faced racist and sexist attacks throughout their public lives, yet a population decisively committed to white supremacy and/or unrepentant patriarchy would never have given a woman or an African American man the majority of votes in a presidential election. On the other hand, it is well to remember that, due to their elitism and fear of the majority, and fear that a democratic society would overturn slavery and other “privileges” of the wealthy, those who drafted the U.S. Constitution were compelled to create an Electoral College to determine the final choice for the presidency, which could overrule the popular vote.

The question remains, why has the Right dominated American politics on the state and national levels for much of the past forty years?

Failure to Address Fairness for All

There are, naturally, more nuanced responses than simply assuming that people are being evil or irrational. In her masterful book *Strangers in Their Own Land*, Arlie Russell Hochschild describes one reason some white working-class

men have disdain for liberals. They see themselves being constantly moved to the back of the line for economic advancement and political and societal caring while liberals, largely through affirmative action programs, slip their own favored groups ahead of them. These white men believe they are being discriminated against because they have been waiting patiently for economic opportunities and benefits they feel they have already earned. What they experience is that the system set up by liberals is unfair to them.⁶ While this complaint does focus on material well-being, it is often shared by working people who have not lost jobs and are not in immediate economic distress. They are moved by issues of justice and fairness even when they are not suffering materially. This perception of injustice, exaggerated by the Right, became a central theme in the growth of the Right and in the subsequent development of racist, “White Lives Matter” movements.

Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, who together totaled sixteen years in the White House, made disappointingly few attempts to use their bully pulpits to address racism, sexism, and classism in American society, much less take seriously *Tikkun* magazine’s proposal to make federal support for public schools dependent on these evils being challenged at each grade level of our education system. Their presidencies failed to help more Americans in the lower 70 percent of income earners or wealth holders recognize that their situation was a product of the shared, radical inequality and class structure in this society, not, as the Right would have it, a product of the minimal affirmative action attempts that have been made to rectify previous unfairness toward women and people of color. Liberal forces could have made important advances had they consistently challenged economic inequality, vigorously educated Americans about the legitimacy of affirmative action for those who had faced systemic discrimination and oppression for centuries, and appointed progressive judges in the first two years of the Clinton and Obama administrations, when their party held majorities in the Senate and House of Representatives. Compare that with the destructive boldness of

Donald Trump, who used his first two years in office to dismantle much of the good done by generations of reformers, environmentalists, and social justice advocates.

Today, the Democrats offer a simple solution to our environmental and other dilemmas: put us back into power by giving us control of Congress and the White House and we'll fix it all. Sadly, this will not be sufficient. When the Democrats were in power, they did not fix it. Though they put in place some efforts to expand environmental protections and develop solar energy, they never touched in any serious way on what environmental scientists told us was needed: a challenge to uneven material consumption, rapid population growth, the role of an economy rooted in growth, defaunation, or the incentivization of farming ruminants for meat consumption; nor did they limit the power of corporations to move their operations from cities, states, or even countries that seek to impose stricter environmental measures.

Democrats and Business as Usual

The Democrats are really two parties: one the champions of the pro-corporate policies of the Clinton and Obama years, the other a more progressive force that reached its best articulation in the campaign of Bernie Sanders in 2016.

Commenting on the electoral defeat in 2018 of Democratic party Senators who took centrist positions, such as Claire McCaskill of Missouri, African American Studies scholar at Princeton Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor opined on Jacobin's website that "we now have tangible proof that you can't beat neo-Confederate, white nationalism with mealy-mouthed middle-of-the-road appeals to civility and good governance. Conservative and centrist Democrats found that voters won't waste their time with cheap knockoffs. The only chance we have to bury the Trump nightmare is a radical political agenda that provides an actual and real alternative to the status quo."⁷

The "Blue wave" in 2018 brought in more progressive Democrats at the local level and in the House of Representatives. But they are still a minority

of elected Democrats and lack control of the party as a whole. With this split unresolved, even a Democratic Party-dominated Congress in the 2020s will find it difficult to overcome much of the massive environmental and human-rights damage done by the domination by corporate-oriented politics over the past forty years. Partial measures—for example, re-affirming the Paris environmental agreements from which President Trump has threatened to withdraw—are already understood by environmentalists to be far too limited to address the global crisis we face.

Further, even a Democratic president and a Democratic majority in both houses of Congress would face the strong likelihood that legislative or presidential attempts by executive order to put environmental and human rights restraints on the free market would be overturned by a right-leaning Supreme Court. For the next twenty years the Court will likely remain in the hands of a conservative bloc committed to protecting the current distribution of wealth and power in the United States. The past decisions of these justices and their ideological orientation will continue to prevent them from imposing serious restraints on the power of corporations, or reversing the disenfranchisement of poor and minority groups, the dismantling of material, safety, and health protections won over the course of the past sixty years, and the loss of important rights for women and minorities.

Given this context, our best bet to taking the decisive steps scientists say are absolutely necessary to save the environment would be to write constitutional amendments that not only overturn specific past Supreme Court decisions but essentially institute changes that the Court could not then block. But to pass any such needed constitutional amendment would require that progressive forces gain a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress, elect a progressive president, and win a progressive majority in two-thirds of the states. This seems exceedingly unlikely unless they take a radical turn toward a new kind of politics described in this revolutionary love manifesto.

To take over the Democratic Party and unabashedly challenge the capitalist system, its materialist worldview, its belief that growth of an economy is a critical aspect of economic efficiency and health, and its championing of individualism, selfishness, and chauvinistic nationalism, progressive forces would have to learn to address the unmet spiritual and psychological needs that the capitalist system is unable to acknowledge, much less satisfy, but about which the Left has been tone deaf. Respectfully and empathically addressing these needs would allow us to win a majority of Americans to effectively challenge global capitalism and its destructive impact.

Could it happen? Some people look at American politics and see the growth of the Right, its powerful financial resources, its ability to play to racism, sexism, homophobia, and fear—and they despair of fundamental change. They point to the increase in mass shootings, assaults on African Americans and Jews, Muslims and immigrants, and conclude that their fellow Americans really are bad people or intractably reactionary. Others, more hopeful, point out that millions more people vote for liberal or progressive candidates nationwide than for reactionaries and that local activism has grown and achieved significant victories, developing local institutions that could become the foundation for a post-capitalist order. Moreover, they observe a significant section of younger people between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five seeking new ways to do politics, in part with the goal of saving the planet. Both pictures are partially true, partially exaggerated. In the 2020s we will see both tendencies continue to be important aspects of our world. But we can't afford to wait while elections tilt one way one year, another way two years later, in endless rotations.

This manifesto is a call for all people to come back to their own highest and most love-oriented hopes and instincts. To have the kind of world we really want—a world that would nurture the most ethically coherent, joyous, compassionate, and hopeful parts of our souls while simultaneously repairing

the global environment and healing the racist, sexist, xenophobic, homophobic, and reactionary nationalist distortions that are flourishing—we will need to purge ourselves of all the fear, pain, and distortions that have led us to give up hope.

I recognize that pessimism about our fellow humans runs deep, in part a product of Trump’s administration and the reemergence of fascistic movements in Europe and elsewhere. For reasons that I will explain, such pessimism has been part of class and patriarchal societies for the past ten thousand years, and has been promoted by the powerful to keep us from uniting and changing the world. But the very pain that these societies cause has often produced revolutionary transformations in the past, and can do so again.

POST-SOCIALISM

This manifesto could reasonably be read as a nonviolent strategy to replace global capitalism with a very different and post-socialist kind of world. Or we could call it a “socialism of the heart” or a “spiritual socialism.”

I was one of the founders, in 1971, of an organization called the New American Movement and published a call for the Left to “Put Socialism on the Agenda.” The New American Movement eventually merged with Michael Harrington’s Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee to form the Democratic Socialists of America. Yet the post-socialist or socialism of the heart orientation I’m proposing is several steps more radical.

Why “post-socialist”? I’ve found those who yearn for a second try at socialism or communism do not really understand the aspects of those systems that are problematic. They correctly point out that none of those movements actually created the democratic control over the economy that was supposedly the defining feature of a communist or socialist society, and they blame the failures on Stalin or Mao or some other perverse or self-interested leaders. But they rarely ask themselves what was lacking in those movements