

THE UNAPOLOGETIC TRUTH

A new vision to reclaim our lives

THE VISION ISSUE: THE ACTION PLAN TO RECLAIM OUR LIVES AND SAVE MOTHER EARTH

It should be clear to everyone by now we are in a period of great change. This is happening for one simple reason: because it has to. We've reached the end of the line of the roughly 30-year societal cycle (more on this later) that has proven to be immensely destructive to our health, communities, and environment. Leadership and the status quo have completely failed us and now you are seeing the results. What you reap is what you sow.

The fuel behind the current protest cycle is extremely combustible, based on an endless list of sins we have chosen to turn a blind eye to for too long. Protests could and should be sustained for a while because of a variety of ills. However, we need to plant the seeds for an alternative future and path, but it better be done right and quick if we want to preserve the Republic. Continuous waves of hardship from our current economic depression will add severe, additional strains to social cohesion.

Still, while protesting and critiquing the problems of our society is an extremely important part of the process of change, there is a huge void in a sustainable vision of life post-protest phase. Protesting alone cannot be sustained without a clear, comprehensive vision that honors the best of who we are and the best of the ideals of the founding principles of our country that have guided and inspired freedom seekers throughout the world. Notice I stated *ideals* and not how they have necessarily been implemented. For the long haul, most people will not feel safe shifting to a new social, political, and economic means of distribution without this clear vision. This issue is an attempt at filling some of that huge void.

The key is how the problems and solutions are framed. In general, people feel overwhelmed by the task at hand (improving fairness; creating better jobs; saving the environment; to name a few) and our collective approach to this point has reflected it—a jumbled, piecemeal approach, often top-down and distant to the majority of individuals. Our visions and “solutions” are often couched in dry, scientific, and depressing language. The

well-intentioned but massively flawed climate change movement is Exhibit A of this, leading to defeatism before even being able to really start and gain momentum.

So, what are the answers? They are right in front of us. They always have been, but our judgement is clouded by the false narratives we have been fed; the overwhelming amounts of information; and the robotic-like and corporate controlled approach we have been taking. This is by design to keep the existing power structure intact and prevent a real threat to the elite and status quo.

To save our economy, health, sanity, freedoms, communities, and the environment—in other words, to have any chance at a better life for future generations—we need to go back to our core, basic human needs. To put this into a famous political spin, *keep it simple, stupid*. Our societal focus and action plan needs to revolve around three things at the local level: food, jobs, and shelter. **Say it with me, and then say it a hundred times more: local controlled food, jobs, and shelter.**

All activities can fit under these three main areas, although many specific actions are highly connected, moving fluidly between the three categories. Moving aggressively forward on the action items listed below would put us on a significantly more sustainable path, resulting in vastly improved health, happiness, and general well-being. In addition, it would give us a fighting chance to ward off the worst impacts of climate change and general ecological destruction.

THE SIMPLE VISION TO DRIVE ALL
OUR ACTIVITIES: LOCAL
CONTROLLED FOOD, JOBS, AND
SHELTER.

Food, jobs, and shelter are what ultimately drive all our economic needs. The pursuit of these needs has been severely corrupted by the forces of greed. Thus, we need to attack the source of our wasteful, undignified, and environmentally destructive ways right at the core by completely reorganizing how we deliver food, create jobs, and promote shelter. It comes down to moving fully away

from our top-down, global, and corporate driven approach to a much smaller and locally controlled system. Vastly more critical and meaningful decision-making needs to occur at the local and individual level.

There is an obscenely small handful of people and companies that control essentially our entire food system, how jobs are created, and ultimately how we shelter ourselves in our own homes and our nearby communities. We have an insane level of concentration of power regarding all the basic elements of our lives, resulting in very few meaningful freedoms, or at the least bit, making it extremely difficult to live how we actually want to live.

Of course, multiple books could be written going into much greater detail on each of the action items, but we don't have time for that. We need to get going now. This newsletter is an attempt at synthesizing large amounts of information, thoughts, and concepts into a comprehensive, but readable format. At the end of the day, the most important thing is to get going on meaningful action.

This newsletter does not claim to have all the answers, but there is plenty here to chew on. More than anything, it promotes doing; any positive action is helpful no matter how small, but everyone needs to act like our house is on fire, because it is. Still, while everything is burning down right now, the positive angle is there is unprecedented opportunity to make real, meaningful change right now. This is because there is a massive power vacuum at this moment in time. However, this vacuum will eventually get filled because all power gaps eventually do fill up. Ominously, there is a very real potential for some sort of frightening style of dystopic future forming real soon involving a combination of 1984 and Brave New World that could be cemented into place if good forces do not come together and take charge via a positive, vision-led movement. But if anyone has better answers and an actual doable plan and vision, please show us because we haven't found it anywhere. There is endless critiquing and blaming. Deep within all the noise one can find a few random ideas to try and save the planet and save our communities, but most fall into the category of doing the same old thing: usually top-down and expensive, money driven plans.

There is absolutely no coherent plan and vision from any traditional political group, think-tank, community development organization, or environmental group that can realistically halt our out of control carbon dioxide emissions; stop mass species extinction and massive loss of natural habitats; address the plague of poverty and extreme income gaps; win back our lost freedoms, sense of self-reliance, and dignified work;; reverse skyrocketing physical and mental ailments; etc. The list goes on and on.

The vision and action items in this newsletter attempt to go to the heart of all these issues. Everything in life is connected. You cannot address political corruption, environmental destruction, health problems, or income inequality individually and in a vacuum. They are all connected and the only way to solve any individual problem is to see how they are all connected. They must be addressed comprehensively via a unified vision and action plan. But the key is to keep things simple and nimble enough in a way that everyday people can not only see the connections, but most importantly contribute to these collective solutions themselves.

This can't be a cookie cutter effort. Trust people to figure out the minute details and best route for their own communities. Our tendency to overthink and overanalyze typically causes paralysis. Things quickly fade from being hopeful to being overwhelmed regarding the situation, which usually leads to no meaningful action being taken. We then quickly buy into the trap of believing in magical big, top-down solutions, often peddled by shysters looking to profit off our collective inaction. We continually desire to find quick, easy schemes often requiring the least amount of nuanced thinking.

Below is a comprehensive list of actions that can meaningfully move the goal posts toward healthy, community-based economies. All the answers are out there; it is simply a matter of putting everything into a coherent vision and plan of action and then having the courage to do it. Of course, this vision has nothing to do with the way our politics is set up. You cannot categorize this newsletter's ideas as a traditional "left" or "right" approach. It is simply a people-centered approach...all people. Both major political parties are abject failures for the people. The political solutions will be the focus of the next newsletter issue. It will be the final issue in this series.

1. FOOD: ESTABLISH A ROBUST LOCAL FOOD PROGRAM

Vision Statement

Every single community in America needs to work towards having a robust community food and farmer's program. Simply put, the goal is for each individual town in America to grow as much food for its own use as possible. This should be via a combination of traditional private farms, community public farms, and a strong network of backyard growers. Some sort of daily farmer's market and distribution system needs to be established. We need to massively increase the amount of food that households receive from food grown in their own town.

What WE Can Do

1. Grow as many fruits, vegetables, grains, etc. as you can on your property

Everyone can do it. Even those living in apartments, condos, etc. have plenty of options to grow plants in creative ways on patios, in planters, rooftops, etc. Avoid chemicals as much as possible. Organically grown should always be the goal. As with any new endeavor, major success won't come overnight. It takes multiple tries to really become comfortable growing food via trial and error. You can't expect instant success in one growing season, as critters, soil quality, plant diseases, etc. can all throw monkey wrenches into your best efforts. Doers understand it takes persistence and that success only comes after relentlessly working at a goal. Still, the rewards of maintaining your own garden are boundless, well beyond simply the food itself.



2. Buy as much of your store-bought food from local farm stores and farmer's markets, including your meats. Consider taking up hunting

The hunting part is not for everyone, but the point is we need to completely move away from our system of industrial-scale and factory farming. The amount of collective suffering that is occurring to agricultural animals to service our system of mass-produced food is appalling. It is beyond comprehension how much evil is involved with the housing of animals in our factory farming system.

Factory-farmed meat consumption highlights the frightening level of collective denialism that humans are capable of. It is amazing the amount of hypocrisy involved in the argument that hunting for food is cruel. This argument is often made by an individual who then turns around and doesn't think twice about how the meat in their typical restaurant or supermarket hamburger was produced. There are endless benefits to grass-fed and

humanely raised livestock from smaller farms in terms of reduced pollution, healthier meats, and happier animals.

3. Organic, GMO-free, fair trade, and local should be bought as much as possible for any remaining food bought in traditional grocery stores

Most boxed food offered in supermarkets are loaded with toxic ingredients and involved large amounts of environmental damage to produce. How you spend your money truly does matter and makes a difference. Grocery shopping is an underappreciated way to make a statement and help make real change for the better.

4. Put pressure on all restaurants to source as much of their food as possible from local food producers

Get comfortable asking restaurants where they source their food from. Let them know it is important to you that they cook with food free of toxins and with meats from cruelty-free farms. Help promote restaurants that are leaders in the organic food movement.

5. Relentlessly push your town to preserve as much open space as possible and to enact policies and programs that would do the following:

- establish public plots of land not only for individual community garden space, but also larger public-controlled farms operated by caretakers. This should be not only for fruits, vegetables, grains, etc., but also public support for local meat production.
- create weekly and even daily community farmer's markets that allow backyard growers, public farms, as well as traditional private farms to sell their food.
- connect locally grown food to food consumption at all local schools, local government offices, nursing homes, small businesses, etc.
- for larger towns and cities, the food networks should be broken down into a series of smaller blocks of areas.
- establish educational programs to highlight the benefits of local food networks. Train people via workshops on gardening and general homesteading skills.

6. Demand that our state and federal governments implement and promote local food policies only

The federal government spends a huge amount of our taxpayer money subsidizing food growth. However, not surprisingly, much of it benefits large, global conglomerates, perpetuating our heavy, chemically laden industrial-scale farming system. Any politician who supports this type of food system needs to be aggressively targeted and removed from office. Voters need to make it clear they want any public funds used to help establish

local food networks that would help lower the cost of production and thus, lower the price of community food.

Results of our Positive Actions

As discussed in Issue #1, there is not a more beneficial endeavor than establishing a strong food program when it comes to a host of needed reforms; whether it be fighting climate change; preserving open space; spurring economic development; increasing local self-reliance and resilience; encouraging growth in people's hands-on skill set; and of course, improving physical and mental health. A robust local food program is just about the best way to lead the charge toward an improved and healthier local-based economic system, as well as planting the seeds for a more vigorous and successful climate change fight.



In addition, it would greatly improve the lives and decrease the amount of suffering endured by animals currently destined for massive slaughterhouse operations after lives spent living in inhumane living conditions.

We would greatly reduce our use of dangerous pesticides that are poisoning our lands, rivers, and bodies. Thus, human health would greatly improve as well.

2. JOBS: COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY-FIRST BUSINESS AND WORKER'S COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

Vision Statement

Every individual community in America will establish their own on-line shopping website, allowing only businesses from that particular community via either a traditional storefront presence or through a home-based business in that town. An umbrella website will link to an endless list of sub-websites that provide convenient on-line shopping from businesses from each separate town.

Several community-first spin off economic development efforts will be established, including the development of worker cooperative programs in which workers fight to not only improve their working conditions, but become the collective owners/operators of business enterprises.

In addition, hands-on job and skills training programs will be established, focused on enhancing skills needed to produce and sell goods in the 21st Century environment.

The ultimate long-term goal of the movement is the production and purchasing at the local community level of as many products as possible that a typical household uses and needs. Not only does the Community-First shopping movement look to help existing local businesses, but the effort aims to encourage an explosion of new household and product skill development. In other words, the movement is driven to help localities become more self-reliant and shock resistant. This will become increasingly critical in the face of an oversized, inflexible, and brittle global economic model, which is growing progressively more unreliable and damaging to localities, individuals, and our natural world.

We want to increase sales for small businesses, crafters, and artists through the development of a dynamic goods and services listing, purchasing, and training website.

What WE Can Do

1. Fully support the creation of community-focused online shopping websites

Shop local as much as possible. If your community does not have an online shopping portal, ask around and insist that one be developed. But don't wait for your local Chamber of Commerce to be able to do this, as they are inherently politically driven and involved too much in local power games. Along the same vein, community planning nonprofits and government agencies cannot pull this effort off either, as there is way too much detailed execution that needs to be pulled off and sustained. This effort needs to be driven by the private sector, with an ambitious individual or group of people coming together to help local businesses catalog, sell, and ship their merchandise through a convenient online portal.

We all want to support our local businesses. This movement aims to make it as easy as possible by highlighting products for sale in your community. Internet shopping is something that should and can be fully embraced by communities. But it goes well beyond that. It's about creating a movement to take back control of our lives from out of reach and out of touch global forces that are destroying the character of our local communities, damaging our health, and plundering our natural world. You have more power than you realize.

One big way is how you choose to spend your money. When you start digging, it is astounding to see what is already available for sale at the local level. It just needs to be cataloged and presented in a unified manner. The possibilities here to revitalize small businesses and downtowns everywhere are endless. But don't stop there. We need all hands on deck. Sharpen up those handy skills, learn a new trade, and create something beautiful to sell.

Simply put, this effort is 100% needed for small businesses and community centers to be able to survive in the 21st Century. The bottom line is we need to do everything in our power to bring both online and traditional foot traffic to small business in downtowns across America and beyond.

There is an endless list of existing websites and movements that talk about supporting local business, but none have taken the critical leap forward of providing a convenient portal for viewing and purchasing goods online that consumers are demanding. This is a trend that will continue to grow, and small businesses need not fear it, but should rather embrace it as a natural and convenient way to drive additional sales.

2. Massively expand the shared office space model

Covid-19 has brought into the mainstream the acceptance of working from home on a large scale. This is one of the positive developments that has come from the turmoil and upheaval of 2020. We need to take advantage of this opportunity and engrain as much as possible the idea of working from home and locally.

There is simply no real need for huge numbers of people to waste endless hours sitting in traffic to go off to a far off and "centrally-located" job. Not only is it bad for our health but we waste massive amounts of fossil fuels and resources to maintain this dominate form of employment. Future generations will be amazed to read about the amount of time people spent on roads to get to their jobs. Wasted resources on an epic scale.

If you are an office worker, work with your company to either work from home permanently or seek out what are called shared office spaces in your local community. There are already some of these out there, but we need a massive increase in the amount of office space in smaller towns that provide an office setting that would allow people to significantly cut down on their commute. Working in the town you also live in or at least in a nearby town would massively increase the vibrancy and viability for a much broader collection of towns and regions.

Given how far technology has come for things such as video conferencing, there is no reason why this couldn't be done and promoted on a massive scale permanently.

Covid-19 has proven that work from home can be easily done for many workers.

If you have the means, look to take the lead and start a business that hosts a shared office space location where a diverse set of workers could rent space to conduct business side-by-side with other workers and entrepreneurs from an endless list of companies.

3. Promote the sharing economy as a natural and healthy enhancement of capitalism

We are all swimming in "stuff". In many ways, it seems like our lives are designed to accumulate as many things as possible, much of which ends up laying around and not really being used. We are all in one way or another hoarders, which feels like the main task the system has earmarked for us. Show our patriotism by shopping, right? But I digress.

There is endless opportunity for people to refinish, reuse, and share existing goods, all with the goal of limiting the number of new things that need to be produced. The main point here is to limit the amount of resources extracted from our environment, whether it be fossil fuels, land, minerals, water, or wildlife.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS THE
PRODUCTION AND PURCHASING OF
AS MANY PRODUCTS AS POSSIBLE AT
THE LOCAL LEVEL.

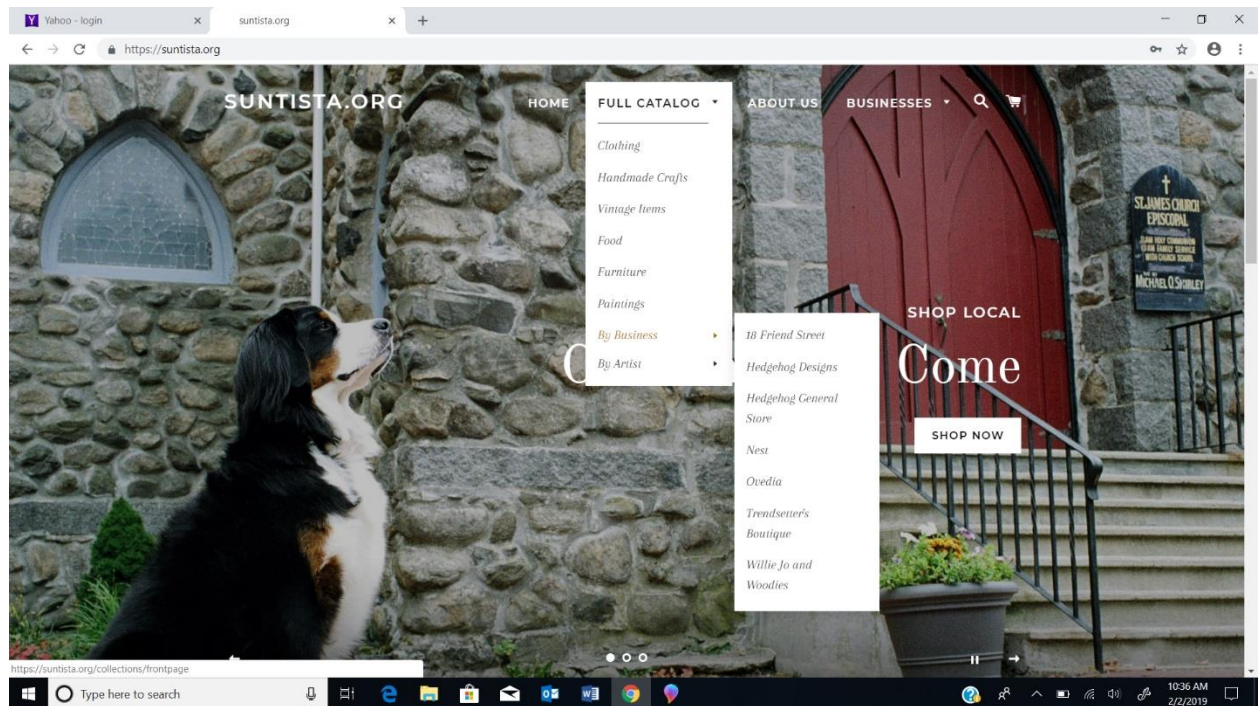
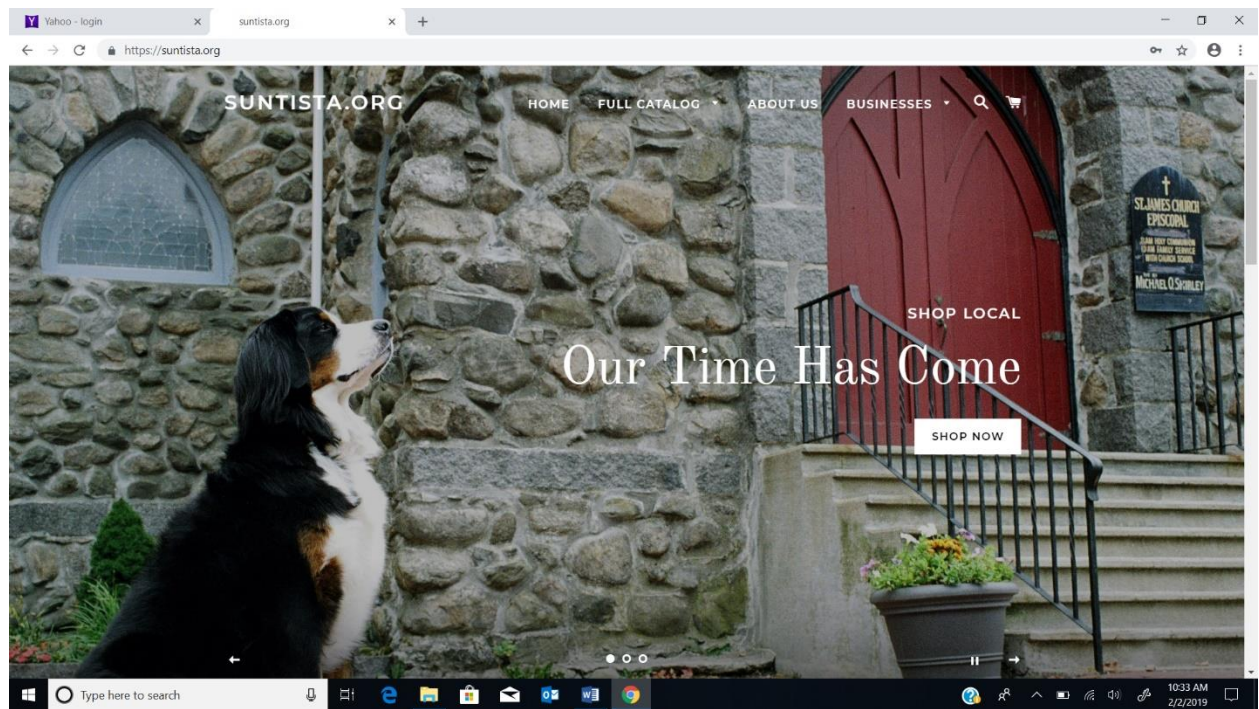
Whenever looking to buy something new, always consider first whether it could be bought secondhand or borrowed instead. Help organize new sharing groups. There is already a plethora of free and sharing websites that have been developed. We need to take things further and engrain the idea of sharing and reusing as something that is not only necessary but is "cool." Be a leader and show the way for your networks of friends, family, and associates by highlighting how easily it can be done to make this a part of your standard shopping routine.

4. Move beyond the limiting models of freelancer jobs and unions to the much more empowering worker cooperative movement

There is nothing new about the concept of worker cooperatives. In fact, most ideas described in this newsletter have been around in one form or another for a long time. They just have been vastly underutilized as strategies for improving our lives. Often, when the idea of worker's rights is brought up, immediately the conversation turns to unions. No doubt unions played a central and critical role in creating and supporting the

AMAZON STYLE ONLINE SHOPPING SITE FOR INDIVIDUAL TOWNS

THE POSSIBILITIES HERE TO REVITALIZE SMALL BUSINESSES AND DOWNTOWNS EVERYWHERE ARE ENDLESS.



middle class. However, unions are limiting and are plagued by similar problems that we see with our system in general. Namely, top-down control—leading to increased chances of corruption—that greatly stifles creativity at the ground level.

Unions have their place, but we need another form of worker empowerment rising side-by-side with unions that would be the more grassroots and direct hands-on form of employment via worker cooperatives.

A whole book could easily be focused on this single subject, but, in short, worker cooperatives aim to have the employees take over the actual running of the business. Every aspect of it. In other words, no bosses. The ground-level workers are also the company bosses, working closely and cooperatively every day to make the business work. Worker cooperatives are much more likely to: create businesses that are environmentally conscious; provide fully dignified jobs; close the wage gap; and keep money in local economies, to name a few.

There are many contemporary examples of successful cooperatives; however, they tend to be more popular in other countries. The most well-known examples are the ones in which a manufacturing firm is heading towards bankruptcy, with workers not only about to lose their jobs, but lose their promised benefits. There are inspiring examples of workers taking over facilities to save their jobs by kicking the bosses and banks out. Starting from scratch, they build a fully democratic form of employment. The workers become the owners, bosses, marketers, and producers of the product. The workers are fully invested in not only their specific job and tasks, but the day-to-day running of the company. It is important to add that worker cooperatives could be formed in a broad collection of industries beyond just manufacturing.

Recently, we have seen the rapid rise in another form of supposed empowerment for workers, which is often referred to as freelance work. All too often though, freelance work turns into another tool for big business and capitalists to take advantage of average people and workers by isolating them. Freelancers often have zero benefits, zero job security, and labor for ridiculously low pay. It has been brilliantly marketed as a hip form of employment, but in reality, it has helped further increase the wage gap between the elite and the majority of the workforce. A classic example is Uber, the hip sounding company that has devastated more regulated and better paying traditional taxi services.

Is all freelance work bad? Of course not. Most things are not this black and white. However, the point is that the mainstream forms of worker empowerment have been taken over by the global corporate mindset like just about everything else. And like just about everything else, the

better path involves local, ground level, and decentralized institutions. In the realm of worker rights, worker cooperatives offer the best hope for improving job quality for our modern times. Are you in a position to perhaps start one?

5. Shift our money to local banks and credit unions

This is a simple one. Close your checking and savings accounts from national and global banks and place your money in small credit unions and local banking institutions. Whenever you need a loan, seek them out from these local institutions as much as possible.

This effort picked up steam in response to the big banking institutions complacency and involvement with programs and efforts that nearly brought down the world economy during the Great Recession 12 years ago. Not surprisingly, these giant banking institutions receive massive backing from the federal government and have unfair advantages over smaller, more local banks.

6. Encourage more people to pursue “real” careers

We need to drastically reduce what is best described as the Professional Managerial Class. In short, these would be jobs where individuals spend their days in front of a laptop working on spreadsheets and such all day long. These jobs involve a lot of moving around of ideas and money, but they don't actually produce much in the way of tangible things. They involve bland education, with names such as “Business Administration” degrees, and include laughable job titles such as “Thought Leader.” Hedge Fund managers, consultants, data scientists, and most politicians and lawyers could be grouped in this category of workers. They often involve the selling of unnecessary things. A blunt way to put it is this class of worker generally survives by leaching off the work of people who produce real things or provide critical services for society.

The real shortages and need for workers involve careers such as: farmers; green chemists; heating and cooling professionals, especially needed in green installations, such as geothermal systems, automated wood heating systems, etc.; naturopathic and other alternative healing medical areas; civil engineers, focused on designing modern and efficient public infrastructure; green landscape professionals; crafters; furniture refinishers; carpenters and woodworkers; sewers and clothing makers; and many similar types of hands-on careers. We need more jobs focused on improving people's health, lives, and natural surroundings, delivering necessary products, ideally produced at the local level.

For example, if you have a son or daughter thinking of working in a field such as biology, chemistry, or the environment, promote them getting an education and

degree specifically in green chemistry. There is a critical shortage of workers in this field. We desperately need an army of scientists who know how to create materials that are non-toxic and safe from the moment they are created!

Results of our Positive Actions

Vibrant local job markets, with a much happier and healthier workforce would be generated. In addition, there would be significant improvements to the environment, one of which would be a massive decrease in carbon dioxide emissions. The only way to reverse the devastation we are inflicting on Mother Earth is to shut down global trade as much as possible. Massive amounts of energy are used to transport goods around the world. This is another area that future generations will be amazed to read about. “What? People in 2020 would ship a basket of apples grown in one country to all corners of the world? How insane is that? How many barrels of oil were needed to pull that off? They used to ship everything around the globe. Why did people allow that?”

Our system of globalization has become accepted largely because our models have been twisted and rigged to benefit the elite and giant multinational corporations. Economic theories are then followed by endless propaganda to make the population accept that there is only one, narrow-minded way to run an economy.

One indicator that would show we have been successful in transforming our economy toward strong, self-reliant communities, would be the bankruptcy of Amazon, replaced by an endless list of locally focused goods and services websites creating with it, local jobs and development programs.

3. SHELTER: CREATING HAPPY, NON-TOXIC LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Vision Statement

We will create spiritually vibrant, inclusive, and healthy places to live by sweeping out the forces of greed. All actions to shelter ourselves will be guided by the following principals: doing as little damage to our natural surroundings as possible; being fully respectful of our fellow brothers and sisters; and ban the introduction of toxic elements into our homes and bodies. We will take matters into our own hands to create beautifully sustained communities and show the way via positive hands-on doing. We are not simply asking or demanding action of our so-called leaders anymore; we are doing and will lead the way ourselves. They will follow us.



What WE Can Do

1. Halt development of greenspace

We are in a cavernous hole when it comes to the health of our environment. We are greatly outstripping Mother Nature's ability to regenerate fast enough to keep up with our insatiable demands as a people. The first step when you find yourself in a hole is to stop digging. This means stopping new development on virgin and pristine lands.

There are free market ideas that can help in this regard. However, as is so often the case, the best solutions are co-opted by multi-national corporations for their benefit, which always ends up watering down any potential benefit and often makes things worse. A perfect example when it comes to “fighting climate change” are carbon credit trading schemes. In short, it allows companies a certain amount of carbon dioxide pollution. These are monitored in the form of credits that can be traded, which allows for major loopholes and distortions. For example, a fossil fuel emitting company can go over their limit by, for example, planting a certain number of trees that will supposedly offset the carbon. One problem is that certain regions of the world can be overly looked to for pollution control. Another concern is the huge reliance and faith in man-made data programs. There needs to be an enormous amount of trust that companies will not only follow through on their pollution controls, but that there are enough outside monitors that can certify: the promised trees have been planted; that they are healthy; and that they are in fact doing their job of helping to lower global carbon emissions in places like the deep jungles of the Amazon.

When talking about a global scheme and network here, you can see how very quickly the effort becomes extremely complex and requires a huge amount of monitoring. There ends up being an endless number of places where the scheme can spring a leak: a company is cheating on its obligations; one region of the world becomes overly relied on to soak up the world's carbon

emissions; or the data crunched by our “data scientist” saviors proves to be off or corrupted.

If you’ve read enough of this newsletter series, you can guess where this is going. Schemes such as carbon credit trading can help to some degree, but it needs to be managed on a much smaller scale. A much better type of trading scheme would be local and regional-run land swap programs. In a nutshell, land swapping would provide credits to owners of green space to trade their ability to develop their open space for credits that would lead to denser development within already built areas.

If carbon emissions trading is to be used, it needs to be at a manageable level. In the US, that would mean between a small handful of states. However, land swaps have the potential to be more beneficial and should be promoted much more so than that they are now.

Closely related to preserving greenspace is concentrating development in the smartest, most efficient way. New England is ahead of the curve in this regard, given this region’s long history of dense development and town center focused community life. Still, even in this region, much more can be done to further enhance zoning to better enhance smart growth and concentrated development. For example, in residential neighborhoods, much greater varieties of housing units need to be allowed, such as granny flats.

Sprawling single family cookie cutter neighborhoods have been the dominant housing development style for decades. We need to speed up the infill of these largely wasteful land use areas by greatly increasing efforts such as community farming gardens, apartment complexes, small scale shopping locations, and a much greater allowance of in-law apartments, granny flats, etc. Of course, it will take a relentless and sustained effort to overcome NIMBY attitudes, but it can be done.

2. Convert underutilized buildings, mainly office spaces, into housing units

In 2020, the world has engaged in a huge experiment to see if large sectors of the workforce can successfully work from home, negating the need for many to often drive great distances, typically to big city centers (think city of Boston). What many people are realizing is that this model is very doable. People are figuring out how to be productive in their home offices full time for a variety of professions. As the saying goes “necessity is the mother of innovation.”

The work from home movement is one of the silver linings of the Covid-19 crisis, as it has the potential to greatly help with carbon emission reductions. It would be a huge shame if we did not build off this opportunity to make more permanent a changing of standard work

arrangements. People should not return to the five-day a week commuter slog once the virus scare passes.

There is a massive amount of office and retail space across the country, mainly in big cities and designated suburban office parks. The question becomes what to do with all this space? As already discussed, shared office space models can be helpful in some locations, but how can we prevent defaults and bankruptcies of office buildings and retail islands and the like on a massive scale, if work from home/work locally becomes the new normal, which it absolutely should? We need to massively promote, via zoning changes, etc., the conversion of many of these sterile office buildings and office and retail parks into new assets such as apartments and condos, which would be an excellent reuse effort, given the great need for additional housing units. This would also greatly diminish the need for more highway expansions.

These first two action items in this section may seem like distant efforts to the average person, but that is simply not true. Everyday people need to flood their city halls, planning board meetings, etc. with demands for the creation of real land preservation plans and beneficial zoning upgrades to allow for the unlocking of all this latent potential. Most likely, we will be greeted by the usual stonewalling from politicians, powerful landowners, and connected home and office builders regarding any meaningful structural improvements to our land use and related environmental policies. No problem. It is time to start protesting in front of your mayor’s house or the big old-boy developer that quietly runs everything in your town. Relentlessly call out the bull and highlight for your friends and neighbors why exactly these issues are so important to our surrounding environment and our personal wellbeing. Follow the money and connections; this is the surefire way of figuring out where to apply the maximum pressure and where to call out the BS. Money and self-interest are always at the base of stonewalling against what is best for communities as a whole.

3. Expand creative uses of shared spaces and living arrangements

Most people understand we are in a moment of crisis, but we are just at the beginning. There will be no quick bounce back from Covid-19 and depressive state of our economy. The game is over. The level of chronic underemployment, debt, and general social decay is now too great. We are on the cusp of a huge surge in bankruptcies that will take years to slog through. We have seen collective leadership fail on a massive scale. The painful period of reckoning is starting. We might as well take advantage of it as much as possible to try and come out on the other side (in ten years, perhaps?) with as great a chance as we can to ensure a much more just and

healthy world. It will take hard work at every level and the rethinking of absolutely everything we do.

Similar to the shared office space concept, we should encourage and are likely to see a major expansion in shared living arrangements. Again, nothing brand new here; the only thing is that society should now actually encourage and support communes, as well as tolerate and understand the need for “squats.”

For many people, communes conjure up horrible images of squalor and abuse. Squats sound like a dirty thing and it can be if kept in the shadows and viewed as criminal behavior. But at the core, what is a squat or commune? It simply is a group of people looking to live together. Sometimes, these are individuals that cannot afford their own place to live. Sometimes, we are talking about individuals who are lonely and/or like the idea of living in more of a communal setting. Nothing wrong so far, right? Why does our society at a mainstream level feel so threatened by communes and shared living arrangements in general? We are going to have to get used to them more because many people will need to explore this type of living out of financial necessity, lest they move back into their mom’s basement, or live out on the streets.

Done with the right intentions and the proper level of support, communal living can be a beautiful thing and certainly could play a part in lowering our overall impact on the environment. Much will depend on the individuals involved in communal living. We all know how it only takes one bad apple to greatly impact a group.

This is another opportunity and area to expand community gardening efforts and local food reliance in general. In addition, communal arrangements can play a big role in revitalizing abandoned or derelict neighborhoods. Unfortunately, we are likely to see a surge in abandoned buildings and neighborhoods in the years ahead. As with anything, we have real choices in how we respond. As a society, we might as well try to take as much positive action as possible. In the long-term fight to improve our environment, economy, and create a more just world, we ought to experiment and encourage more shared living arrangement ideas and how best to provide support to them.

We are also facing an increasing elderly share of our population in the immediate future. This is almost like a ticking time bomb that we often forget. It seems to me the United States is woefully unprepared in dealing with a surge in its elderly population. How will we manage? Are distant and cold places such as nursing homes for vast numbers of people really the best we can do and the healthiest way to treat our elderly on a grand scale? Why is it such a bad thing to encourage multi-generational living via efforts such as granny-flat zoning, or

encouraging multi-generational and multi-cultural communes in underutilized buildings and neighborhoods, with the goal of working towards self-sufficiency through robust gardening and worker cooperative-style small businesses to support the commune? This is all coming in a big way to a town near you and we ought to embrace the best potential aspects of shared living. Otherwise, if our society remains under control by the corporate mindset, these communes will in fact more likely become squalid living arrangements. Again, it comes back to who is in control of society. If communities can reclaim their destiny from our corporate and corrupt elites, communal living can turn into a beautiful movement promoting sharing, caring, and respect for our natural surroundings and fellow humans on a grander level.

4. Promote more robust use of green energy

We hear a lot about green energy. But what exactly does it mean practically speaking, and more importantly, are we approaching the issue in the best possible way?

In short, we need to drastically reduce the amount of fossil fuels used to heat and power our homes and buildings. The problem is that the environmental movement, just like everything else, has been co-opted and taken over by corporate forces. We have become way too complacent with the propaganda that technologies alone, namely wind, solar, and electric vehicles, will magically save the planet.

Solar and wind energy absolutely are positive things to pursue. The problem is that we are kidding ourselves in putting all our faith in these limited options and letting the wrong forces drive the planning and implementation.

Put it this way: the solar and wind industry are largely controlled by a small handful of large companies, often focusing on creating huge, sprawling solar fields and wind turbine “farms” on pristine tracts of land. They typically create more problems than they solve. Compare that model to small-scale solar and wind turbine installation focused at the homeowner level, with an implementation plan that is controlled by a wide variety of smaller businesses and local governments. Option one is bad. Option two is good. It is all about scale and who is ultimately in control of implementation.

And while solar and wind are excellent to consider, it has always puzzled me why other very viable green energy options receive such little spotlight. Namely, geothermal and biomass. I have come to the conclusion that there are two main reasons. Number one, solar panels are a status symbol for many people. Solar panels on your roof allows you to easily promote that you are green, whereas people who have a house that is heated and cooled by energy below ground via a geothermal system are not easily able to show this. I always have to laugh when driving by a

giant new cookie cutter McMansion home that happens to have a couple of roof solar panels, but the house was probably built with cheap and toxic chemical-covered materials made in a far off land, with the new house set way off the street, wasting vast amounts of land for a useless front yard that is unnaturally green because of chemicals (end rant). What a perfect symbol for the modern environmental movement.

The other reason is that solar panels and wind turbine production are things that can be more easily controlled by corporations with political connections, allowing them to receive government assistance at a level much greater than an industry such as geothermal whose installation is generally going to be carried out by HVAC technicians who don't have nearly the clout of a solar company.

Like solar and wind, biomass at a large scale can be an unbelievably bad thing. A giant biomass power plant that needs vast amounts of trees to generate its electricity is not good and can lead to vast deforestation when corporate controlled. Still, what is biomass heat? It is the oldest form of energy for mankind. It is heating your home with wood. If you have an old home heated by a traditional oil-fired boiler, this writer strongly encourages people to pursue replacing with automated wood heating systems. These are not wood stoves for the fireplace, although that is a good avenue to pursue as well. Automated wood heating systems act just like central heaters in your basement. They heat the whole house, but instead of using home-heating oil, wood pellets are fed into the heating unit from a pellet storage bin in the basement. This writer is currently in the process of having one installed for a circa 1740 home to replace an extremely inefficient steam radiator oil heating system, which are all too common still, especially in New England.

There is significant cost upfront, but generous rebates are often available for automated wood. During research for this home project, it was shocking to see how little of this technology is currently being used. Very few people seem to be aware that this option even exists. A big part of the issue is that there are very few qualified installers out there. In addition, the HVAC industry, like many industries, tends to resist change and has long-time installers who do not want to bother learning a new technology. It becomes a bit of a chicken and egg situation. Do we need more qualified installers first or do we need a big surge in demand from homeowners? It is probably a combination of both, but we certainly need a lot more people entering the green home energy business. There is huge business potential for HVAC specialists and contractors to get into the automated wood heat game, which would significantly help with our efforts to enhance the environmental movement.

Similarly, we need lots more people looking into geothermal. If you have air duct furnace heating and have sufficient outside property space, geothermal heating and cooling would be an excellent way for you to make a real difference in lowering your carbon footprint.

5. Build up our homeowner and creative skill set

The harsh truth is that most of us are basically helpless sheep. For decades, our society has pushed people further away from the land and further away from being mostly self-reliant for our needs. Up until relatively recently, mankind's survival largely depended on the individual having a wide variety of practical skills. This is certainly not the case today. We have ceded control over just about everything to outside forces, rendering most people skilled only in a small handful of tasks, usually revolving around computers and office life.

This is not an attempt to overly romanticize how life used to be because in many ways our lives are much better and much easier than it was decades ago. Still, there is plenty of evidence that we've gone way too far to the other side. The constant focus on making our lives as convenient as possible has made us soft, fragile, and largely void of having important basic survival skills at the individual, family, and community level. Now, with the collapse we are seeing in 2020, our apathy and tendency to take most things for granted is going to bite us in the ass. This issue of apathy, convenience, and the passing of blame and responsibility plagues our political system as well. Has there ever been such a void in real leadership? When the shit hits the fan, who can we turn to now? Boy, do we ever need a Winston Churchill kind of speech to help guide us right now, but where is this person or movement?

Coming back full circle to this section, one of the silver linings of our current economic collapse is that it is going to force people to go back and focus on the simple things. We are going to build back up our confidence in basic house skills that have traditionally been needed: food growth; cooking; cleaning; organizing; property maintenance; carpentry; hunting; foraging; sewing; clothes making; singing; story telling; respectful conversation and listening; civics and local politics; history; poetry; etc.

6. Take matters into our own hands

We are all living in a fishbowl. There is no escaping anything, as we are being constantly monitored and watched. If people only 20 years ago learned about the amount of oversight every single American was under in the year 2020, they would be shocked. However, this is a classic example of putting a frog in water. Society decades ago, would act like a frog put in hot water. People would immediately jump out, run, and revolt. However, we all know how things work. Forces of oppression have put

people in cool, comfortable water, then slowly turned up the heat. People don't realize it until it is too late.

Real freedoms have all either died or are just about dead. It has happened and there is no denying it. This next sentence bears repeating many times in your head. Read it over and over until it really sinks in: **Americans today are the most surveilled group of people in the history of mankind.** All of us: black, white, rich poor, young, old, etc. Yes, it is true. We have all been so focused on how different we are, or what marginalized group to blame for our problems that we've failed to realize that we have all been trapped and placed in the fishbowl by the system. We have been so mesmerized for so long about what the magician has been doing with the visible hand that we've failed to see what is going on behind the scenes.

There is nothing left to do but to fully embrace it. You might as well work with this reality and throw it back in their faces. Force the issue, every single solitary issue. Let them know you know very clearly you are being watched and monitored. Treat all our institutions with the respect they deserve, which is none. Don't take anything they say to heart (don't get riled up by them.) Ignore the games, just act, and do. Treat them like toddlers. They've proven time and again they don't deserve our respect. They need to earn it. Unfortunately, a significant percentage of our population exhibits a clear case of Stockholm syndrome. No matter how many times we are lied to and fooled by the people and institutions that control our society, people want to believe this time is truly different and this time they are really telling the truth and have the best intentions in mind. It is like Groundhog Day.



Good thing you only need a small percentage of people to see through the illusions to be able to enact real change for everyone, including the easily duped. Stop waiting around for things to happen or expecting someone else to do the work. Just make it happen. A simple example. An "anonymous" person recently became fed up with the embarrassing condition of a public street that was littered with long-standing potholes. This town seemingly has

unlimited funding available for massive new and expensive infrastructure projects but has proven time and again of not being able or willing to keep up with basic maintenance. If enough people started doing simple acts of "civil disobedience" such as below, watch how quickly our local government forces would snap out of their slumber and react for fear of being further exposed.



**** Picture above: just one of an endless collection of potholes in a small stretch of this street. This particular hole had been around all year and was a good 5 inches deep by 29 1/2 inches wide by 38 inches long. Even bigger ones were nearby and also addressed by the citizen. One measured over 80 inches in length. How many untold vehicles were damaged by this stretch of road?*



**** After picture following late night cold patch fix party that took place on a hot summer night, followed by copious amounts of celebratory drinking (at least that is the rumor floating around from the unnamed rebel troublemaker, ha!). Take pride in your neighborhood beyond your property boundaries. Our leaders obviously do not. Show them the way by doing instead of simply complaining. Nobody can save us from our rapidly decaying society but ourselves. We the people need to show the way forward in every single facet of our lives.*

OVERALL BOTTOM LINE

Big, top-down green solutions won't save us. The mainstream environmental movement has collectively put us to sleep and mesmerized the public into believing that magical solutions can save the planet. We are placing a massive bet that a handful of global, corporate-controlled efforts such as giant solar farms, wind farms, and electric cars can suddenly reverse climate change and reduce environmental destruction, with minimal amounts of in how we live our actual day-to-day lives.

Society needs to take the opposite approach. We need a strong collection of smaller, less sexy solutions, focused on essential needs that involve an endless list of local communities and individual hands working collectively on a day-to-day basis to create a complete transition from the big and global to the small and local.

Everything could revolve around two main action items: we need to establish strong local food networks to address our most basic human need; and we need to focus the creation of jobs and purchasing of goods at the local level, centered on individual community selling, purchasing, and trading websites. Everything can revolve around these two main fundamental pillars.

HOW TO MEASURE IF WE ARE SUCCEEDING?

We place enormous importance on distant measures of success for society, such as National Gross Domestic Product (GDP) data. In fact, most everything revolves around this statistic. While macro indicators such as GDP numbers have their place and can be helpful, it cannot and should not be the be-all and end-all to measure how we are doing as a society. We need a vast collection and wide variety of indicators to see how we are progressing.

We need to massively expand the focus of our monthly national report card, which currently concentrates on a handful of narrow statistics: GDP and unemployment rates are the big ones. These are supplemented by a few other indicators such as inflation, housing sales, income growth, and budget deficits. We need to complement these national indicators and place just as much emphasis, if not more, on statistics such as: carbon emission levels; habitat restoration; reversal of plant and animal extinctions; cancer rates; suicide rates; percent of total food and goods purchased within a certain radius; etc.

No doubt an aggressive implementation plan of local controlled food, jobs, and shelter would produce enormous benefits to our environment and personal health. We will know we have succeeded in transitioning our economy and culture for the better and have put

ourselves on the path to truly addressing climate change if the following takes place:

- if giant monopolies such as Amazon and Facebook were to go bankrupt and out of business
- chronic illness and obesity rates decline noticeably
- huge numbers of toxic chemicals are banned, replaced by nontoxic materials, with the effort led by workers such as green chemists and naturalists
- self-reliant enclaves sprout up everywhere and indigenous groups can reclaim their way of life
- vast decrease in the amount of cargo traded globally
- huge shift in government spending toward community building and away from corporate welfare and war
- a strengthening of core family life via simple indicators such as the number of family dinners held
- an explosion in civic engagement/civic group activity
- increases in the number of underground newsletters, civic meetings in pubs and coffee shops and an explosion in numbers of citizens not only running for elected positions, but also running as true independents or via newly formed political parties
- big decreases in social media use
- far less reliance on lawyers and the litigation culture to grease the wheels of society, signaling a return of forces of trust, dignity and honor in how we handle ourselves
- people feel proud again about their culture and country and have more faith in our future and leadership
- a massive decrease in bureaucratic jobs (cogs in the machine in both the private and public sectors) and much greater numbers of "real" jobs, such as farmers, successful small business owners; carpenters, etc.

WHY SHOULD YOU ENGAGE?

Why put in the considerable effort to do all these things? Because if we don't, our children will live in a world characterized by desolate landscapes of toxicity, with unbearable heat and rivers of microplastics flowing through their bodies and veins. Average life expectancy will be on a sharp decline (it already has started to decline in America today), with people living out unhealthy lives within a Matrix-like political system completely devoid of any freedoms. Militarized police forces will roam every street of America, with the general population constantly ratting out their fellow miserable neighbor. No freedoms, no happiness, with most people just cogs in the soulless machine serving an extremely small group of global elites. Easily put, this is the future we face and frighteningly soon if radical and positive changes are not planted now. The uncomfortable truth is that even if every idea in this newsletter gets implemented immediately, it may be too late to prevent most of the expected atmospheric changes

impacting our climate. Nevertheless, at least we can start the long journey of transforming our built landscape so that people in the coming decades have a much better chance to manage their conditions more positively. In addition, by aggressively taking action to change the course of humanity, at the very minimum, it would send a powerful message to the dark forces flowing through our universe, which would do wonders for our collective psyche. The worst possible thing for our generation's legacy is if we just decided to capitulate and give in despite all the evidence of the need for strong action. If we are to go down, we need to go down swinging and be able to say that at least we fucking tried. We still have real choices in how we shape our future, but decisions for the better will not come from any established institutions. It must come from the people at the ground level.

While climate change is one of the main driving forces for the need to radically change course, paradoxically, the worst thing that has happened to the broader environmental movement has been the almost complete takeover of environmentalism by the laser focus on "climate change," along with the overreliance on dry, scientific statistics and language to drive everything. You will never, ever motivate people on the much deeper level needed to make real change by constantly hammering people over the head with doomsday predictions and endless distant and macro level statistics. Like everything in life, at the end of the day, this is a people issue. We need to reach the general population on a much deeper level, which is at the level of the heart and soul in order to pique our natural instincts.

We need to be much lighter on our feet with our strategy and actions. Put the challenge of improving the environment within the language of a series of local, small scale actions that everyone can meaningfully engage in on a daily basis. The key is to set up our society in a way that people almost forget that their everyday actions are saving the earth while simultaneously improving their communities, health, and level of happiness.

The climate movement is the perfect example of the problem when "science" and scientific thinking overtakes everything. Science and data most certainly have a critical place, but it can't be the constant focus. In other words, the best way to actually address climate change is to not even talk about climate change. Imagine if we drastically slowed talk about "climate change" and simply discussed creating healthy communities and lives? Small pivots in tactics can make all the difference. We need to focus on the everyday concerns that are right in front of our faces. This would greatly help in tapping into people's deep emotions, which is critically important to gathering the critical mass of people needed to move the needle in a positive direction. The mainstream language used in the

modern environmental movement is much too heavy, large-scaled, and depressing.

Not surprisingly, with all the stresses people are facing on multiple fronts, combined with the absence of leadership, and lack of a clear and coherent path forward, we are seeing a frightening level of censorship building up and drive to destroy people's lives who do not conform to conventional thinking. Many people are waking up in a big way, are angry, and are ready to act, all of which are good things. But, at a general level, we are rudderless. We want society to go someplace better but are having a hard time explaining and envisioning what that place can look like on an everyday practical and comprehensive level.

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Thus, the current anger we see in the general population is not being channeled nearly as well as it needs to be in order to make deep and sustainable change. Still, if we can establish a coherent vision to strive for, we have an unprecedented opportunity right now to make the changes we need to put us on the right path in a relatively quick amount of time. But we better do this soon. The fuel can burn out quickly if there is no vision. Plus, the general public will quickly get tired, bored, and begin to turn on "change" if change becomes synonymous with destruction, censorship, and blame. This would ensure the dark entities ability to piggyback off our justified rage and lead us down a far darker path involving a combination of 1984 and Brave New World. Our future is either this dark path or the alternative beautiful world path full of empowered people and local communities. The road we take will be cemented within the next couple of years. Periods of great change don't last long and the ultimate path gets decided quickly.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

Raise your hand if you have experienced this before. As a conscious and concerned citizen, you seek out ways to meaningfully engage and make a difference. So, you grab a book; watch a podcast; read an environmental advocacy website; and attend events featuring prominent environmentalists. No matter what the venue or who you listen to, it is almost always the same thing. Information

is presented like a sledgehammer to the head that not only drowns you with how awful and essentially hopeless the situation is, but you get bombarded with endless dry but important sounding stats, such as degrees of global Celsius warming. Then, after this long and brutal trip, you come to the last five minutes of the drawn-out speech or article for so-called solutions to “stop climate change.”

If you haven’t gone too far down this road, let me summarize. In a nutshell, despite almost universal agreement by scientists and leading environmentalists that our grandchildren will be living in hellish conditions if we stay on the current path, the message for average people is essentially to just sit back and let the experts figure it all out. It is tantamount to waking up in the middle of the night with your house engulfed in flames and deciding as the head of the household that the first thing to do is to run out and call the authorities, hoping they arrive on time to save your family, as opposed to ensuring your spouse and children get out safely as well.

It is infuriating to see all these well-meaning people rightly tell us how dire the situation is, only to then turn around and basically tell the average person that there is nothing really for them to do other than feel really bad and guilty; send lots of money to large environmental organizations; shout political slogans; support standard politicians in their supposed “fight” for us and generally put all our trust into the current disconnected system that has gotten us in this mess in the first place: corporate driven “solutions” such as carbon credit schemes, or typical top-down and massively expensive, bureaucratic, dated, and inflexible federal government “green new deal” programs, with most of that money syphoned off by global corporations and their shareholders.

If there are on the ground action items mentioned for average people, it is almost always focused on the technology-centered ideas of solar panels and electric cars. These ideas make us feel better, as it allows us to believe we can continue to live our current oversized lives. However, this mainstream narrative that technology alone will save us and that we can continue to be driven by “economic growth” and ever more accumulation of “goods” by more people is the definition of putting lipstick on a pig. Never mind the fact that the production of solar panels and electric cars use massive amounts of toxic chemicals; require large amounts of fossil fuels to produce; and are controlled by the same old global corporate network. It is completely naive to think solar panels and electric cars can be the central strategy to saving the planet, but we have collectively bought in to this magical thinking. Any positive benefits that solar panels and electric cars bring quickly gets negated within the same old system of more growth and the over-taking of additional global resources and land.

Within this framework, too often you will leave the lecture or web page feeling defeated and that the situation is helpless. Nothing you could do in your daily life really matters in the current narrative and setup. Often the writer, organization, or speaker admits they don’t have actual solutions—they are just looking to point out the dire situation. We are now well past the time of simply critiquing and lamenting where we are. We need action by everyone, everywhere. All hands are needed on deck.

We need to stop overthinking and overanalyzing and having our collective spirit overwhelmed by our horrible top-down and technology-centered mainstream environmental strategy. We need to take things into our own hands via an on the ground proactive strategy that creates beauty around us, focusing on our lifestyles as the central strategy to improving the environment.

Follow the big money. Our collective environmental efforts are being led by the largest global banks and corporations, often the biggest polluters on the planet. Because of their reliance on funding, most prominent environmental groups have been bought off by the corporations, relegating citizens to shouting empty slogans and promoting hollow actions. We have fallen into a deadly vortex, driven by modern man’s disease of always seeking quick fixes and easily sounding “solutions.” In other words, trying to have it both ways, i.e. pursue ideas that make us feel good and feel like we are making a difference, but not changing our fundamental lifestyles and the typical ways we deliver goods, food, jobs, and shelter whatsoever.

The same thing can be said for our economic development strategy. Everybody deep down knows our current systematic setup does not work for most people. We have endless proof based on the historic levels of wealth gap, low paying jobs, horrible health, etc. But the discussion always falls back to the old, tired, and limited capitalism vs. socialism battle. Any criticism of capitalism means you are automatically a socialist or communist in the mainstream. It is true that socialism is not the answer to our problems. In short, the problem with traditional socialism is that big and top-down systems severely limit ingenuity, freedoms, and creative ways of living life. However, the point here is there are multiple ways we can run our system under the umbrella of capitalism. Our current capitalistic system has been taken over by monopolistic entities. The solution is returning to the ideals of small business growth at the community level.

Making a real difference requires a relentless and steady list of micro actions centered at the community level, with locally derived solutions. It needs to be a leaderless movement involving small, daily actions taken by everyone that add up to big change at the collective level. These heart and soul-driven actions are often unsexy

sounding and low tech, involving large amounts of blood, sweat, dirty hands, and tears. We need to trust our basic survival instincts, with simple and grounded solutions, focused on our family, well-being, food, communities, passions, jobs, and livelihood. Creativity and flexibility in order to best take advantage of people's natural talents and abilities is key. We all need to grow and evolve with this movement. There is a tremendous amount of skills development just waiting to be discovered by all of us.

CYCLES OF CHANGE

Covid-19 and the New Great Depression will be remembered in the history books as a major turning point for society. The last great marker for the ever-shifting tides of the human experience was thirty years ago when the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989. Anyone who remembers that moment remembers the genuine feeling of real change in the air. Something really big was happening. It was an unmistakable indicator of the end of the Cold War that had dominated global politics for decades. The West had won. And while the death of Soviet-style communism was a positive for many in the world, America was now the lone superpower. With the void created, globalization went into overdrive. The end of the Cold War set off a series of inevitable actions, centered on unfettered free trade, leading to an era of corporate dominance that has impacted every aspect of our lives. This void also allowed for the major expansion of phenomena such as the "War on Terror," along with the steady erosion of basic freedoms such as freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, which can only thrive under rule of strong, citizen-controlled societies.

It seems true turning points occur roughly every 30 years, as part of some sort of natural cycle of change. In this writer's eyes and many others as well, the previous marker of great change before the fall of the Berlin Wall was the late 1950s, which was characterized more by a hodgepodge of impactful events that set in motion inevitable change and the way we looked at the world. It is important to look at when the seeds of change are planted, as opposed to the end results. For example, many people would argue that a year such as 1968 was more of a change year for America. Several big occurrences associated with 1968 and the late 1960s in general, including the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy; large scale protests; the

Vietnam War; and the hippie culture, to name a few. However, much of the late 1960s was actually about dark forces shutting down movements and reasserting control. The same can be said for World War I and World War II, which are prolonged events centered on destruction and more about the end-result of actions that have occurred.

In the late 1950s, huge seeds of change were planted. Civil rights activities picked up steam, which led to the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. The hippie and counterculture movement of the 1960s would not have happened without the Beat culture paving the way in the 1950s. The late 1950s also saw major advances in microchip research (leading to the eventual computer/internet revolution), the birth control pill (with huge implications for the workforce/family life), and the space race began to really take off.

Before the late 1950s, the stock market crash in late 1929 that signaled the start of the Great Depression clearly set in motion huge changes to America. It marked a clear pivot point that set the stage for a host of programs and efforts that helped create the great middle class that dominated America in the middle of the 20th Century.

Going back one more cycle, it was at the turn of the 20th Century when President McKinley was assassinated, which allowed Teddy Roosevelt to become President. This put the Progressive Era firmly in place and moved the country beyond the Gilded Age. Roosevelt was far from perfect and in fact championed many destructive policies, centered on the way he viewed certain countries and foreigners and in a lot of ways helped establish our country's overreliance on military force and brutality to ensure global dominance via an imperial mindset. Nevertheless, he championed many ideals and policies that were hugely beneficial to society, most notably, helping expose political corruption and breaking up the big economic monopolies, which helped lead to the narrowing of the staggering amount of income inequality the US was experiencing at the time (sound familiar to 2020?) Also, his environmental conservation record is unmatched among Presidents. The bottom line is Teddy Roosevelt was a giant influence in our history. Yes, he represented some horrible tendencies. But he also represented the best of America's ideals: individuality; standing up to power; no nonsense attitude; extreme hard work and drive; etc. His legacy is not black and white. It is layered like most things.

"THE TIME IS ALWAYS RIGHT TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT." DR.
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

REAL FREEDOM AND TRUTH ARE ONLY FOUND IN THE UNDERGROUND