

DECLARATION OF REBELLION

We hold the following to be true:

This is our darkest hour.

Humanity finds itself embroiled in an event unprecedented in its history, one which, unless immediately addressed, will catapult us further into the destruction of all we hold dear: this nation, its peoples, our ecosystems and the future of generations to come.

The science is clear: we are in the sixth mass extinction event and we will face catastrophe if we do not act swiftly and robustly.

Biodiversity is being annihilated around the world. Our seas are poisoned, acidic and rising. Flooding and desertification will render vast tracts of land uninhabitable and lead to mass migration.

Our air is so toxic the United Kingdom is breaking the law. It harms the unborn while causing tens of thousands to die. The breakdown of our climate has begun. There will be more wildfires, unpredictable super-storms, increasing famine and untold drought as food supplies and fresh water disappear.

The ecological crises that are impacting upon this nation —and on this planet and its wildlife — can no longer be ignored, denied or go unanswered by any beings of sound rational mind, ethical conscience, moral concern or spiritual belief.

In accordance with these values, the virtues of truth and the weight of scientific evidence, we declare it our duty to act on behalf of the security and well-being of our children, our communities and the future of the planet itself.

We, in alignment with our consciences and our reasoning, declare ourselves in rebellion against our government and the corrupted, inept institutions that threaten our future.

The wilful complicity displayed by our government has shattered meaningful democracy and cast aside the common interest in favour of short-term gain and private profit.

When government and the law fail to provide any assurance of adequate protection of and security for its people's well-being and the nation's future, it becomes the right of citizens to seek redress in order to restore dutiful democracy and to secure the solutions needed to avert catastrophe and protect the future. It becomes not only our right but our sacred duty to rebel.

We hereby declare the bonds of the social contract to be null and void; the government has rendered them invalid by its continuing failure to act appropriately. We call upon every principled and peaceful citizen to rise with us.

We demand to be heard, to apply informed solutions to these ecological crises and to create a national assembly by which to initiate those solutions needed to change our present cataclysmic course.

We refuse to bequeath a dying planet to future generations by failing to act now.

We act in peace, with ferocious love of these lands in our hearts.

We act on behalf of life.

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FOREWORD **VANDANA SHIVA** Academic

The signs are loud and clear. From the Earth. From science. From women. From children. From indigenous communities. From our daily lives.

The life on this planet, and our own future, is under severe threat.

We are living through the sixth mass extinction, driven by the limitless greed of the 1 per cent, their blindness to the ecological limits the Earth sets and the limits set by social justice and human rights. We forget that we are one humanity on one planet. There is no planet B. This is where we will live, or go extinct as a species, with the millions that have been driven to

extinction by the violence and carelessness of the brute force misleadingly called the economy.

'Economy', like 'ecology', is derived from oikos — our home, the Earth. An economy that destroys our home is no longer an economy. It is a war against the planet, the people and our future.

The Hopi people of North America describe the phenomenon of destroying everything that sustains a society as Powaqqatsi — 'an entity, a way of life, that consumes the life forces of beings in order to further its own life'.

The Powaqqatsi phenomenon of the Hopi is clearly in evidence today. We are dealing with a destructive force that is taking out life forces wherever it can. If the corporations have their way, our fragile web of life will be poisoned and broken, species will be driven to extinction, people will lose all their freedoms to their seed, to their food, to their knowledge and decisions, and all social relations will be ruptured and broken.

Life, society and democracy are under threat. We refuse to allow this future to unfold. We love the Earth; we embrace humanity. We celebrate our biological and cultural diversity and we will defend the rights of the Earth, and the rights of all its citizens, including the last child, with our fearless love and compassionate courage.

To make peace among people we need to make peace with the Earth. To defend the human rights of people we need to recognize the rights of Mother Earth. We need to live through our creativity and her generosity to reduce our ecological footprint while expanding our planetary consciousness of being an Earth family, with one common home.

The extermination of biological diversity and of indigenous cultures that know how to live in peace with Mother Earth is part of one extinction, one interconnected war against life. Ecocide and genocide are one indivisible process, and they began with the idea of the colonization of the Earth as the 'civilizing mission' of a 'superior race'.

In his fifth annual message to Congress on 3 December 1833, US President Andrew Jackson said:

That those tribes cannot exist surrounded by our settlements and in continual contact with our citizens is certain. They have neither the intelligence, the industry, the moral habits, nor the desire of improvement which are essential to any favorable change in their condition. Established in the midst of another and a superior race, and without appreciating the causes of their inferiority or seeking to control them, they must necessarily yield to the force of circumstances and ere long disappear.

And the tribes did disappear. In 1492 the estimated population of indigenous people in the continent north of Mesoamerica was 18 million. By 1890 the Native American population had dropped to 228,000.

Gandhi wrote in his book on freedom, Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule, 'This [attacking] civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed.' However, in the process of this civilization's self-destruction, it is destroying the planet and our lives. It is destroying our future.

Therefore, it is a moral imperative to rebel against a system that is driving extinction, exterminating species and cultures. To not cooperate has become a moral imperative — a survival imperative. The non-cooperation must begin with the refusal to accept that a system based on ecocide and genocide qualifies to be a 'civilization'. There are better ways to live, to produce and to consume. Extinction Rebellion begins with the liberation of our minds from colonizing categories. We are diverse but equal — not 'superior' or 'inferior'. The extermination of life in its diversity cannot be justified by declaring other species and other cultures 'inferior creatures of God'.

The Earth is for all beings, today and tomorrow.

I call Extinction Rebellion 'Satyagraha for Life'. Satyagraha, for Gandhi, was non-cooperation based on the force of truth.

Today's struggle for truth is that extinction and extermination are not inevitable. They are crimes against the Earth and against humanity. And we can stop this crime by refusing to participate in and cooperate with this project of ecocide and genocide.

Together, as diverse species and diverse cultures, we have the creative power to stop extinction through non-cooperation at every level, beginning with each of us, expanding the rebellion into 'ever-widening, never-ascending circles' of interconnected life and freedom.

This is the call of Earth Democracy. This is our highest duty as Earth citizens.

AFTERWORD by **ROWAN WILLIAMS** to XR's Handbook: **'THIS IS NOT A DRILL.'**

It just might work. It is just possible that sustained pressure will bring about a modest change of heart among decision-makers and 'wealth creators' and some serious adjustments might be made.

I can hear the sound of people not holding their breath. It isn't only inertia that we have to contend with, unfortunately. It's vested interests, passionate commitment to the goods and privileges we enjoy because of the way in which we — the collectively wealthy of the world — have chosen to use the material that lies around us.

That 'lies around us'? In a way, there's the problem. We have completely and successfully internalized the belief that the world is made up of dead stuff plus active minds and acquisitive wills. We have lost or suppressed any memory of what it is to live in alignment with the rest of the world, to understand how our bodies themselves 'think', how we are fed and sustained by the flow of life and information through matter. Our technological skills, instead of reminding us of our deep involvement in all this, produce ever more seductive ideas of how we could distance ourselves still further from the bodily structure that simply is what and where we are.

We both fantasize and worry about artificial intelligence, that ultimate technological triumph which we like to imagine will cut the umbilical cord uniting us with the complex, beautiful, alarming vortex of material energy we're part of. We dream of liberation through AI when we have never learned or have forgotten the natural intelligence that belongs to living in the world as it is, the intelligence that we should be able to see all around us in the interaction of living and non-living existence, the pervasive energy that circulates in the universe, what one modern scientific writer (Kitty Ferguson; thank you, Kitty) wonderfully called 'the fire in the equations'.

So it might not work. Many of the contributions to this book face this possibility (probability?) squarely, which is why it is such an uncomfortable book to read. But what makes it more than a jeremiad or an apocalypse is the sheer energy of conviction here, the conviction that change is worthwhile, whether or not it 'succeeds'. This is because the writers of this book have done some joined-up thinking. The climate crisis is not some unfortunate accident but a reality that has been at the very least accelerated and measurably worsened by a set of habits and assumptions that have poisoned us as a human race. We may or may not escape a breakdown. But we can escape the toxicity of the mindset that has brought us here. And in so doing we can recover a humanity that is capable of real resilience.

To put it very directly: it is worth changing our habits of consumption, the default settings for our lifestyle, the various kinds of denial and evasion of bodily reality that suit us, the fantasies of limitless growth and control, simply because there are healthy and unhealthy ways of living in this universe. To go on determinedly playing the trumpet in a string quartet is a recipe for frustration and collapse and conflict. There are ways of learning to live better, to make peace with the world. Learn them anyway: they will limit the disease and destruction; they may even be seeds for a future we can't imagine.

One of the essays here notes that addictive behavior doesn't alter overnight. The priority has to be the plain reduction of harm and risk, the fostering of better habits and (I'd want to add) the creation of strategies to salvage relationships, self-respect, even the possibility of joy. Extinction Rebellion recognizes that the climate crisis is a symptom of far wider kinds of malaise and corruption in the human imagination. That's why the creation of panic, with its inevitable accompaniment of self-protection and withdrawal, is useless in addressing the challenge. We need a fresh sense of the delight to be found in human and non-human creation alike, a fresh sense of the importance of living in attunement with who we are and what the world is.

In the Book of Proverbs, in the Hebrew Scriptures, the divine wisdom is described as 'filled with delight' at the entire world which flows from that wisdom. For me as a religious believer, the denial or corruption of that delight is like spitting in the face of the life-giving Word who is to be met in all things and all people. I long for and pray for change, not just because I want to see my children and their children having a planet to live on, a future that will not be marked by a rising spiral of violent conflict over what is left of the world's goods and a downward spiral of disadvantage and deprivation for the most vulnerable. I long and pray for it because here and now we need to recover our health, our balance — the skill of living with and in the neighbourhood that is this world.

'Neighbourhood' is not a bad word to think about in this connection. We're told on the highest authority to love our neighbours as ourselves; and when Jesus Christ was invited to define who counted as a neighbour, he gave a rather surprising answer. The neighbour is the one who gives you life; and you never know where the next gift of life is coming from, so be alert and ready to love the stranger and the one you think is the enemy. But if the neighbour gives life, then the material world we are part of is obviously a 'neighbour' in the most dramatic way, the life-giving cradle of human existence, the source of air, water, food, not to mention beauty and challenge. 'Neighbourhood', 'neighbourliness' — we all understand pretty much what such words mean, and their homely and prosaic character is itself a reminder that finding a new and fuller way of being human is not at all finding a way of being superhuman (or post-human). It is about settling to inhabit where we are and who we are.

A revolution is a turn of the wheel, and the paradox of true revolution is that it takes us back from insanely dangerous places to having our feet on the ground again — coming back to where we started and knowing the place for the first time, as T. S. Eliot puts it in his greatest poem. In this time of massive public denial and displacement — so miserably evident in the ego-boosting dramas of the Brexit debates and the resurgence of surly, self-protective localism across the world's political landscape, Extinction Rebellion urges on us the revolution of coming to ourselves, coming to truthfulness, healing the broken connection with what we are.

It might just work. It might allow a new space and a new imagination to flower in the face of incipient tragedy, a new hope and dignity for human agents, not least among the young, who can so easily feel completely ignored and unvalued in a world apparently indifferent to their future. Change the narrative, and who knows what is possible? Accept the diseased imagination of the culture we have created and the death count begins now. Anger, love and joy may sound like odd bedfellows, but these are the seeds of a future that will offer life — not success, but life.

