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Capitalism vs. the Climate

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This Changes Everything. The reason I chose this title is not because I think my book will change everything but because I think climate change changes everything. And I think that that's a good place to start the discussion. When choosing a title, it's good to choose a title that starts the discussion where you think it should start, because a lot of interviews begin with "Why is your book called that?"

The reason it's a good place to start the discussion is because it's important for us to understand that we have procrastinated so long that there are now no non-radical solutions left on the table. If we stay on the road we're on, we face radical changes to our physical world. This is what the vast majority of climate scientists tell us and now what some of our most conservative, staid institutions are telling us. The World Bank, the International Energy Agency, Price Waterhouse Coopers tell us that if we stay on the road we're on, we are headed towards warming of between 4 and 6 degrees Centigrade. That's 10.7 Fahrenheit on the high end. That is incompatible with anything that we might call organized, civilized society. All the models break down, really, after 3 degrees. The scientists tell us they don't know what this would look like beyond the fact that it would be radical change, it would be whole, huge cities under water, whole countries disappeared, it would be massive crop failure. And possibly much worse.

All we have to do to arrive at this scary place is nothing. All we have to do is not react as if this is an existential crisis. This is known as business as usual, being us, only more so. Because that's what we do: We grow more and more and emit more and more every year. So that's one radical scenario on the table.

Another radical scenario that I discuss in the book is what's increasingly being taken seriously among the very serious people, and that is intervening in the climate system through radical technologies at a global scale, sometimes called geoengineering, to try to make those outcomes less disastrous, potentially making them more disastrous. We don't know. You can't find out before you do it, because you can't build a model of the climate system to scale. Yes, I spent a fair bit of time hanging without with the would-be geoengineers, the smartest guys in the room, who are talking about fertilizing the oceans, pumping sulfur into the stratosphere, solving the problem of pollution with more pollution, dimming the sun. That's pretty radical.

The good news is that it's not too late to prevent these radical physical and engineering scenarios, but the way we do that at this point involves radical changes to our political and economic system. These are certainly considered radical, at least by current political standards. They involve questioning and really breaking, as I'll argue, every rule in the free market playbook to which our leaders are still in thrall. I spend a lot of time in the book talking about the need to challenge this so-called free market ideology because I feel like we can spend a lot of time talking about various solutions, cap and trade versus cap and dividend, and we lose sight of the fact that actually none of it's happening, certainly not at a national level, certainly not at a level that will get us anywhere near where we need to go. That has to do with the ideology that has swept our world. So the argument I make about why we have failed so miserably to rise to this challenge and the fact that we've failed is now beyond debate. Since our governments started meeting in 1990 to come up with a plan to reduce emissions, global emissions have gone up by 61%. That is not a good record.

There are all kind of theories that have been put forward to explain this inaction. We sometimes hear that it's just human nature, that this crisis seems too far off and we're hard-wired to respond only to immediate threats. This rationale doesn't really ring true anymore because, of course, climate change is looking more and more like an immediate threat. It certainly looked like an immediate threat when Superstorm Sandy flooded Wall Street. Not that Wall Street has changed its behavior in any way. So there is something else. And we know that we humans have responded to abstract threats before when our immediate safety was not threatened. We have this in our history. Then it must be something about us. I think a lot of us believe this, that it's our generation that is too selfish. So this is one of the rationales.

The other rationale is just that it's too complicated. You have to get all of these countries to come together and agree on a set of rules, and it's just impossible. We hear this a lot. But, of course, our governments have come together and they have agreed on all kinds of things, whether it's the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depletion, whether it's arms treaties. But what about the creation of the World Trade Organization? What about a global trade architecture with binding rules that our governments have managed to build in this very same period when they were

failing to deal with the climate crisis? So clearly we can cooperate and come together if the interests are aligned with those in power.

There are little bits of truth in all of these rationales and some I haven't mentioned. But I think that we haven't paid enough attention to one of the biggest obstacles to change, which is just bad timing, bad historical timing. By this I mean that scientists have known about climate change for a long time, but the point where we lost all plausible deniability, we the public, was really 1988. That was the year that James Hansen testified on Capitol Hill that he now had a high degree of certainty that there was a connection between emissions and warming. By that year 87% of Americans knew about global warming. And that year, when the editors of Time magazine needed to choose their Man of the Year, they decided not to give it to a man—they were still only giving it to men—but to Planet Earth. "Planet in Peril." It was a really interesting essay that accompanied that cover story, which talked about how climate change really called into question the whole Western civilizational paradigm of domination-based thinking, the idea of the Earth as a machine, which it traced back to Francis Bacon. It was a really interesting essay to read in Time magazine. You could never imagine it appearing today.

Speaking to people who were involved in the movement at that time, there was really a feeling that this moment was the dawn of a new consciousness. Then the Berlin Wall collapsed the next year, 1989. This was when Francis Fukuyama declared history over, when the ideology that in most parts of the world that is called neoliberalism declared victory over all other economic models. And it was then exported around the world. 1988, the same year that Hansen testified, was the year that Canada and the U.S. signed the historic free trade agreement that was then expanded into NAFTA, which became the model for future bilateral and multilateral trade deals. A few years later the World Trade Organization was formed. So you had these two parallel processes.

This was a problem. It was a problem not just because the global economy, as it was being called, that was created was a particularly high-emissions one, but because the ideology of neoliberalism had as its pillars privatization, deregulation, cuts to taxes, paid for with cuts to social services, now called austerity, never-ending austerity, all locked in through this architecture of free trade or investor rights deals. What I do in the book is show how each one of these pillars of this ideological project that so successfully spread around the world has stood in the way of what we need to do to respond decisively to the climate threat.

I'll just give you a few quick examples. A lot of this is obvious. Take austerity. In my lifetime all I have known of the public sphere is its dismantling. My parents' generation built things, but since I have been a conscious

adult, it has only been about stopping the cuts, stopping the attacks. We don't get to build things anymore. Of course, this has reached catastrophic levels in this country, and particularly in Europe in the wake of the financial crisis, which has been passed on to the public. And you see the direct clashes, because, of course, if we're going to respond to climate change, we need to invest seriously and on a large scale in not just protecting the public sphere but reinventing it along the lines that Casey was talking about.

We see the clash when disaster strikes. You see it in this country during Hurricane Katrina, that clash between heavy weather and weak, neglected infrastructure, a government that doesn't seem to be home, can't seem to find New Orleans. We saw it during Superstorm Sandy, where you had these widely divergent experiences of a natural disaster—or not a natural disaster. If you have resources, you're kind of okay. But if you're in public housing that has been allowed to decay, the lights are out for weeks and weeks, no one shows up. It was a bunch of 20-somethings from Occupy Sandy, as it was called, who were doing front-line work, which was amazing. We did some filming of this makeshift health clinic that was started in the Rockaways. It was incredible. It was just heroic work. But the people were going, "Wait a minute, where is the government? Why are we doing this?"

There were historic floods in England this year. It was very interesting to see the logic of austerity clash with what the public wanted in that moment, which was a forceful public response. This was a problem for David Cameron, sort of Mr. Austerity himself, because he had slashed the agency responsible for flood response, knowing that increased flooding is clearly going to be one of the impacts of climate change in Britain. Nonetheless, he had laid off more than 1,000 people. He cancelled hundreds of flood defense programs. Another thousand jobs were on the chopping block. And people connected the dots. Cameron was so panicked in this moment that he had to publicly say, "Money is no object. We will spend whatever it takes."

That's just a glimpse of how, if we take this crisis seriously, this logic of austerity cannot hold. Our governments have to find the money. And that means going to where the money is. Part of the response is going after the fossil fuel companies, polluter pays. We'll come back to that.

This is happening all over Europe. In Greece the fire trucks don't have spare tires going into forest fires. Greece is a tinderbox. This is how austerity is playing out in that country. At the same time, in the name of exiting austerity, Greece is being told that they need to drill for oil and gas in the Ionian and Aegean Seas. Which is madness, because this is a country whose two major sectors are tourism and fisheries.

When I call the book *Capitalism vs. the Climate*, people say that's divisive. But the thing is, capitalism is already waging war on the climate. The point of this is, I

think there are different levels of denial. We talk a lot about there's a right-wing denial, where it's really obvious and it's easy to laugh at the people at Fox News. But I think we all engage in our own versions of climate denial. One of the reasons why we have to stop is that if we look and let ourselves feel the depth of this crisis, we have some of the most powerful arguments we've ever had to argue for a saner economic system.

I'll give you another example—free trade. A lot of people in this room have been involved in these battles. How many of you were part of the Battle of Seattle 15 years ago? A couple? A few? One of the things we're finding is that we knew when we were fighting the World Trade Organization that this was a system that sacrificed workers' rights and environmental rights in the name of short-term profits. But we did not know how right we were. Because what's been happening in recent years is that some of the best climate policies are being successfully challenged in trade court.

I'll give you an example from close to home for me. Ontario had the most ambitious emission reduction program in North America. It was lauded by many people in this country, including Al Gore, for its extremely ambitious plans to get 100% off coal by 2015. The Green Energy Act was introduced in 2009 in the midst of the economic crisis. It was introduced because of concern about climate change, but it was primarily introduced because of concerns about unemployment, because Ontario is an economy that is extremely reliant on manufacturing and, in particular, car manufacturing. Our auto sector was getting decimated by the fact that the big three auto makers were on their knees at this point, and it was easier to close Canadian plants than to close American plants when you're going to the American government for a massive bailout, which is what was happening at that time. So there were huge numbers of layoffs in the manufacturing sector in Ontario.

So, very smartly, the Ontario Liberal government introduced the Green Energy Plan, which had these ambitious emission-reduction targets but also had very ambitious job-creation targets and required that any player, any company, but there were also non-companies—co-ops, communities, and so on—that wanted to benefit from Ontario's new Feed-in Tariff Program had to 40% to 60% of their equipment in Ontario. So it was a job creation plan. It was about rebuilding our moribund manufacturing sector. I profiled in the book a company called Silfab, which was sort of like the poster child for how this was supposed to work. It's a solar plant on the outskirts of Ontario that opened up in a closed-down auto parts factory. So it was the perfect symbol: old economy dying, new economy opening. All these workers who had lost their jobs at Chrysler and Magna, which is a big auto parts manufacturer, got jobs on the assembly line making solar panels for this new

program, and 31,000 manufacturing jobs were created. All was going well.

But then Japan and the European Union challenged Ontario's Green Energy Plan at the World Trade Organization and argued that that requirement that a certain percentage of the jobs remain local was discrimination against their companies, against European companies and Japanese companies. The WTO ruled in their favor, and Ontario lost, and rolled, over very, very quickly, in fact, in part because the Canadian government wasn't about to fight for renewable energy when this is an extension of the oil and gas industry, as you may have noticed. We're seeing more and more of these cases.

This is not an isolated case. The U.S. has challenged China's renewable energy subsidies, India's renewable energy subsidies. And it's tremendously ironic, because you listen in on a summit like the one that just happened in New York, and it's all about governments sort of pointing the finger at each other: You're not doing enough; no, you're not doing enough; I won't lead; no, you lead. But in fact what these governments are doing is running to the World Trade Organization and trying to knock down each other's windmills at precisely the moment when we need all of our governments to be rolling out the most ambitious plans they can, and to do it in a way that will get political buy-in.

This was about a just transition. This was about supporting a sector that was getting hit hard and having a just transition to the new economy. And we were told that's not allowed. In the book I quote Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, who talks about how absurd it is that we are leaving the fate of the planet in the hands of what he calls "silly lawyers, who didn't even understand the issue when they wrote the rules." Nonetheless, it is happening.

The good news is we're facing a whole flurry of new trade deals. That's not good news in and of itself. The good news is that I think we're starting to pay attention to trade again, after tuning it out for a long time. A lot of us are very concerned about TPP and the European deal and, specifically, how it is undermining the actions that we need to take on climate. I think that this, once again, is the best argument we have ever had against these deals. We cannot allow trade to trump the planet. There is no stronger argument than that. But that is precisely what these deals are doing. We can't be afraid to use that.

Another pillar of the neoliberal era, of course, is privatization. I want to talk a little bit about how so many of our cities, states, provinces have sold off key sectors that are central to the energy transition that we need to enact is standing in the way.

Many of you have heard a lot about Germany's transition to renewable energy. It's a complicated case; it's not all perfect. Nonetheless, it is definitely worth appreciating that a highly industrialized economy like Germany, that does not have a lot of sun, has managed in

a decade and a half to go from 6% of its electricity coming from renewable energy to 25% coming from renewable energy, mostly wind and solar, most of it decentralized. This is a real success story and one that shows that when we want to and the political will is there, we can move quickly. We need those success stories.

One of the things we don't hear about the German transition is that one of the things that has allowed Germany to transition as quickly as it has is that in hundreds of cities and towns, big cities as well as small towns, citizens have voted and decided democratically to take back control over their electricity grids from the private players that privatized them in the 1990s. They're doing this because they want to be part of this energy transition, they want their power to come from clean energy, and private players are not willing to move fast enough. So they are deciding to take their energy back. But it's not only that. It's also that they want the money from the power generation to stay in the community. So it's addressing both the austerity crisis and climate change at the same time. The problem is not just that it's dirty energy; it's also that the money is just hemorrhaging from communities into shareholders' pockets. That's not acceptable either. It's become a pro-democracy movement, an anti-austerity movement, and it's a climate movement.

These are the types of paradigms that we need, I think, to win. It's also starting to spread. It's happening in this country, too. Boulder, Colorado is a fantastic example. Boulder, this green city, is very much like some of the cities in this region. It had this problem, which is, despite the fact that everyone biked and wore fleece, all of their energy was coming from coal. So they wanted to switch. They went to their local private energy provider, Excel Energy, and talked about how they wanted to switch to renewable energy and were basically shut down. At that point they started exploring taking their power back, taking their energy back, not because they were ideologically opposed to privatization. It was because they wanted to be part of a green energy transition, in line with their values, and the profit-driven interests of this company were standing in their way. They took that step. I think it is interesting that these aren't ideological movements. These aren't movements that are starting by saying, "We're anti-privatization." They're movements saying, "We want to do something about climate change," and discovering that they need to take on the logic of privatization in order to make that happen.

There are other ways of bringing in green energy, and I think there are a lot of examples of that in this region. But there is clearly a tight correlation between very ambitious renewable energy targets and keeping energy in public hands. We see examples of that in this country, too. Austin and Sacramento are two of the cities with the most ambitious emission-reduction targets. And they never sold off their energy. There are lots of public utilities that are

producing dirty coal. But I think the point is that it's easier for us to change our public utilities than it is for us to change for-profit enterprises.

I said Germany is complicated. One of the reasons it's complicated is that while Angela Merkel has been willing to put in place some great incentives to encourage renewable energy, what she has not been willing to do is to say no to the fossil fuel industry. Coal is continuing to expand. Even though demand is dropping in Germany, the coal companies are just exporting that energy. Sound familiar? So it's not a simple success story. Sometimes we tell ourselves we can do this all with market mechanisms and having the right incentives in place, but it's clear that it has to be a combination of finding creative ways to say yes to what we want and bold ways of saying no to what we don't want. Part of what has us stuck right now is that we have a leadership class globally that has really lost the knack of saying no to big companies. When they're dangling big investment projects, they automatically say yes. You look at Obama. It has taken him now more than three years to just say no to the Keystone XL pipeline. I'm starting to think he's going to leave office punting this decision.

The exciting thing is that, with our leaders failing to lead, failing to do what they need to do, there is the emergence of what some have started to call Blockadia, this grass roots regulatory structure, let's just say, of communities. It's been so powerful in this part of the world. I really do think that the fossil fuel industry did not know what they were in for when they decided to build so many tentacles through the Pacific Northwest. This in many ways is the flip side of the carbon boom that we're in the midst of. Of course, the fossil fuel companies are doubling down. They're building all sorts of new infrastructure. They're doubling down on some of the dirtiest carbon sources. They have to build all this infrastructure, and it takes them into territories that are distinctly hostile. I used to say that the World Trade Organization built our coalitions for us. In many ways the fossil fuel companies are building our coalitions for us by the sheer ambition of their coal trains and their oil trains and their pipelines and their LNG terminals and the rest of it. That was what was so exciting about the climate march this past week, is that you saw that network that is place-based really coming together in the streets in common purpose.

In Canada one of the most exciting parts of the emergence of this fossil fuel resistance, as our friend Bill McKibben calls it, is the way in which it is building really powerful ties between non-native and native communities. Whenever there is a big resource battle, we see these connections. But there's something new happening. We saw this really clearly with the emergence of Idle No More and all these resistance movements, whether it's to the Cherry Point coal export terminal or the Northern Gateway pipeline through B.C. I think what more and

more of us are starting to understand is that indigenous First Nations' treaty rights and aboriginal title are the most powerful legal barrier to the plans to just flay this continent.

Those rights become more powerful when there are mass movements defending them and when they are embraced by whole societies. This is really starting to change, I think actually changing, the way we think as well as the way we fight. I think it is and it has to be about more than the extractive relationship to those rights, that those rights are useful to us because they help us protect our water, so we want to use those rights. That's exactly the wrong way of thinking about this. These are rights that come out of a vision of how to live well that were hard-won and hard-protected, and they point us towards a non-extractive, regeneration-based way of living on this planet. That is the most hopeful and exciting part of this new wave of activism.

This can sound overwhelming. Anything about climate change can sound overwhelming. And it's certainly easier to talk about changing light bulbs than changing the economy. But here's what we need to remember: It's not like we're talking about an economy that is working beautifully except for the small matter of rising sea levels. We're talking about allowing sea levels to rise in the name of protecting an economic system that is failing the vast majority of the people on this planet, with or without climate change. By responding robustly to climate change in line with what scientists are telling us, we have a once-in-a-century opportunity to solve some of our biggest and most intractable social and economic problems. We can create countless good unionized jobs in the next economy. Every dollar invested in renewable energy, efficiency, public transit creates six to eight times as many jobs as that dollar would create if it went into oil and gas infrastructure. Those jobs can rebuild our ailing public infrastructure, and that infrastructure will give us more livable cities, stronger communities, healthier bodies. We all know this.

We can find the money by making polluters pay, whether it's the fossil fuel companies or the bloated defense companies or the financial speculators. To do any of this, of course, we must dramatically reduce the power of corporate money in politics. Everybody who is trying to get anything done in this country that is in any way vaguely progressive, whether it's fighting private prisons or for gun control or universal health care, knows that money in politics is the single greatest barrier. The question that I'm left with is whether climate change can provide the big tent that we need to build a new kind of coalition, put us on a science-based deadline and tell us that we cannot afford to lose.

I think it can, and I'll tell you why. The atmosphere is already our big tent. We are already under this big tent, and we have to start acting like it. We're coming up on the fifteenth anniversary of the Battle of Seattle, when the

streets of this city were choked with tear gas and flooded with hope because a mass coalition, a movement of movements, put the system of short-term corporate greed behind the World Trade Organization on trial. It disrupted the negotiations and emboldened internal dissent, and the talks broke down. They never quite recovered. But after September 11th that movement broke apart. Some were spooked by the new war on dissent. Others turned their attention, understandably, to stopping a war and increased criminalization. But we stopped talking about the system underneath it all. Then three years ago this month, the Occupy movement sprung up and put corporate capitalism on trial once again, to draw the connections between the logic of deregulation and austerity, the inequality crises ravaging our communities. The whole world listened. I firmly believe that movements like that never die, they just go quiet for a little while. They learn, they change, and reemerge.

Now another movement is taking the stage, the climate justice movement. It's made up of all these past movements and many more older ones, deeper ones—the civil rights movement, the indigenous rights sovereignty movement—for the deep shift in world view that we know this crisis is really about. Because underneath all of this is the truth that we've been avoiding: Climate change isn't an issue to add to the list of things to worry about, next to health care and taxes. It's a civilizational wake-up call, a powerful message, spoken in the language of fires, floods, droughts, and extinction, telling us that we need an entirely new economic model and a new way of sharing this planet. Telling us that we need to evolve. Thank you.

Q&A

If we want the good life for all 7 billion people on this planet with sustainably grown food, sustainable use of precious raw materials, enough per capita wild spaces and rain forest, clean water, health care, and living space, what are your thoughts on the needs and benefits of voluntary population reduction? Do you think we can ignore that question?

I'm not sure what voluntary population reduction means. I wouldn't say that population has nothing to do with the ecological crisis, but I think that we sometimes overplay it. Where population is growing fastest is in sub-Saharan Africa, and that is where emissions are lowest. If we want to deal with this crisis most effectively, we talk about consumption among the wealthiest people on the planet, not procreation among the poorest people on the planet.

Do you think climate change is the perfect topic to introduce a wider conversation about capitalism? I mean, in a sense we have the equivalent of right-wing climate denial on the left, capitalism denial, the desire to use

euphemisms like “the free market” or “corporations” without asking the kind of wider questions that connect to things, like you say, about how elections are funded and those other things?

There is a larger constituency of liberals that really does not want to talk about capitalism than I anticipated. A lot of the criticism of the book has just been about the name. The subtitle I almost went with was “The Revolutionary Power of Climate Change.” As you heard from the talk, that’s the argument I’m making. But I do think that there is a core tension between our economic model and what our climate needs from us, that we have an economic model that is built on short-term expansion and we need to contract our use of resources. We don’t need to contract every part of our economy. We can grow other parts of our economy and we need to grow other parts of our economy that are low-carbon already, the parts of the economy that are going to make this transition possible. But at the same time, we do need to contract.

So we dance around. We really don’t like saying the word “capitalism,” particularly in this country. It’s easier to talk about growth than it is to talk about capitalism. I actually think focusing on growth is less helpful than talking about capitalism. Because in a lot of people’s minds, when you are talking about capitalism, you are talking about greed, you are talking about corporate greed, and you get closer to that; whereas if you talk about growth, then the first thing people think is that it’s all going to be contraction and it’s all going to be loss. That’s a very negative discussion to have. And isn’t true that it’s all about contraction. It’s really about how we manage our economy.

I’d just like to say I always enjoy these talks, but it sometimes feels like it’s kind of preaching to the choir. I just wanted to know what your thoughts are on disseminating all the information that you have, that you presented tonight, to people who mainly get their information from news outlets that it goes against their financial interest to report on all these topics. They might have corporate ties to fossil fuels, so they won’t want to report on the climate march, they won’t want to report on any of these issues, and we will continue to maintain the status quo. So just how you think that this movement is best going to be spread out beyond the people who already know about it.

I feel like that is starting to happen. And some of it is happening in a more old-fashioned way. The climate march in New York was an extraordinary exercise in popular education, really old-fashioned community organizing. It was an incredibly diverse march. It did not look like the choir. It mobilized all kinds of communities that are normally left out of the environmental movement. That was not done with the help of any corporate media.

That was really legwork. And it was that hard, old-fashioned organizing work of building bridges across different constituencies, doing popular education. I think we need to return to some of that, just teach-ins, just basic popular education. A lot of people don’t participate in the climate discussion because it seems really, really wonky and they’re afraid of making a mistake. You’ve got the science side, the policy side, the UN. There’s a whole bunch of worlds that have their own language and their own jargon. So just unpacking it for people and creating context where they’re not afraid to make a mistake is really important.

But I don’t know that this is about going through corporate media at this stage. There is some of that. Like there was *Years of Living Dangerously* and that kind of work. But I’m not sure that that’s what builds a movement. I think the movement building is when people see the connections with their daily lives, and it comes from trusted sources. We spend a lot of time thinking about how we reach people who watch Fox News. We actually have a lot more work just building a broad, diverse, progressive movement and building bridges between the various constituencies in that world before we worry about reaching the climate deniers.

If you could send some advice to yourself back in time when you were first writing No Logo, what would you say?

I didn’t really know anything then. Coming back to the last question about sort of preaching to the choir, I think one of the things that I’ve learned is just how nourishing it is to be in a movement. I think we kind of belittle it when we talk about it as just preaching to the choir, as if this work doesn’t matter. But when you’re taking on really powerful forces, it can be pretty brutalizing. And if you’re going to do it, and if you’re going to immerse yourselves in some of the worst of what humans are capable of, which anybody who is involved in social justice work is doing, you also need to counterbalance that by being in community and valuing that community and supporting each other.

The antinuclear movement has not really been brought up that much in the talks about climate change. I just want to bring up nuclear power and nuclear weapons, which are one and the same. The question is this: We have mining with nuclear, we have uranium mining, we use coal for the spent fuel. I just wanted to say that I find it important to include all of these things within talks on climate change. And thank you for all the work that you do.

How do we sometimes get over the hypocrisy in fighting for a fossil fuel-free world when you can’t really get away from fossil fuel —when you go to the grocery store and you go home to your polyester sheets and the plastic in

everything you buy, and even a lot of people who went to the climate protest flew there? How do we get over this kind of conflict within ourselves, when we use fossil fuel every day? We don't want to, but you really can't get away from it.

It's a great question. In some ways I think that we—we the environmental movement—overemphasized the individual actions at the expense of the big, systemic changes that we need. It was all about recycling and carbon offsetting and turning your personal life into a low-carbon piece of performance art. A lot of it was quite classist, too, because there are so many communities that have no good transit options, where people are so overworked as well that people are having to make convenience-based decisions that are about low cost but also about zero time. This is what our culture does to people. And this idea that it's about being perfect and green and buying more green stuff was super alienating to a lot of people, and I think was part of why the climate movement was so homogenous, meaning white and middle-class.

But there's something really key. I don't think we should let ourselves off the hook; we should all try to bring our actions in line with our values. But I also think that we should all embrace our inner hypocrites and stop playing gotcha. Because if you need to be pure, if you need to be fossil-free in order to fight fossil fuels, that's a great way of having a really small movement.

How can your organization lead in inspiring voter registration in all the places where we have too low of voter registration and to teach America a new story about finding the right candidates to run for office and to win for office? Because the stories that we're told right now have to do with money. And here we have a situation where we have the right person running against somebody who needs to be out of office.

I would just add that it's about getting involved in politics at every level, including at the local level, where maybe it's a little bit easier to break through. I would be remiss if I left Seattle without just saying how will critically inspiring it was for everybody to watch the \$15 minimum wage victory. That kind of ambition is really contagious and inspiring. All eyes were on you.

The Alberta tar sands are so destructive, but the cash flow is so overwhelming that there's no control possible. Do you have any good news about the Alberta tar sands?

Yes, I do. I think the best piece of news we've had so far is that Stat Oil, which is the big Norwegian oil company, a huge player in the tar sands, announced the suspension of a multibillion-dollar tar sands investment because—one of the reasons cited was uncertainty about pipeline capacity.

That is the strategy of cutting off the arteries that we've all been involved in.

As you've pointed out, the indigenous nations are making this region a choke point of fossil fuel shipping, but Swinomish and other tribes are also working with historically hostile local governments on climate change adaptation. Putting this book together with your last book, about disaster capitalism, Have you seen people preparing for these inevitable storms, disasters, power outages that are coming in a way to position community organizations in a place where we can instill disaster cooperativism and ways of bringing together communities and using that to also help build those bridges you're talking about?

That is a great, great question. It's certainly was a big part of the discussion post Sandy in New York, just that the communities that fared best were communities where people knew their neighbors, weren't afraid, because there was a lot of fear, too, like all this fear of looting, and just this understanding that this social fabric that we're able to build with one another is important. Yes, seawalls are important, but relationships are even more important" Checking in on one another when communication systems break down, as they inevitably do, that we still know each other's names and where to find each other and knock on each other's doors. This has to be understood as part of disaster response. So, yes, I think we need a really broad understanding that responding to climate change isn't just about rebuilding the sort of public sphere in the sense of big state. It's about reclaiming the whole idea of the commons, of the public, of the communal at every level against the attacks and the idea that we are nothing but atomized individuals and there's no such thing as society. That's another piece of the big war of ideas that we need to be fighting and also building. In that sense a farmers' market is disaster response. Anything we do to strengthen our communities and get to know one another and build those relationships of trust is part of preparing for the storms ahead.

I realize that I didn't respond at all on the nuclear question, and I do think it is an important point on this, because it's important to remember that this vision of responding to climate change by building a more equal society is by no means the only way of responding to climate change. There is a shock doctrine scenario that is very clear. That is not just the profiteering from disaster, but it is also the positioning of these big engineering fixes that continue to put communities at risk. So more and more there is talk about replacing fossil fuels with nuclear, positioning GMO crops as climate-ready, climate-smart, and attacking small farming as unrealistic and some agrarian fantasy, which is one of the ways I'm getting attacked at the moment. A few years down the road it will

be the geo-engineering fix being presented as more realistic than any of the stuff that we're talking about.

That's why I think it really is about identifying the values that we want to govern us as we move forward together. Even more important than identifying individual policies is identifying those values. One of the values that I think we need to put at the front of our movements is that the people who have been on the front lines of our toxic extractive economy need to be first in line to benefit directly from the next economy.

About the no-new-carbon infrastructure, drawing the line. This is the Keystone principle. I would say we need to extend that to the principle of there being no more sacrifice zones. We know that we can power ourselves without sacrificial people and sacrificial places. I think that that's really important to the nuclear discussions. Who are we asking to eat the risk for these technologies? And if it's not us, we have no right to ask it of anyone.

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