

# **COMMON SENSE FOR THE 21st CENTURY**

Only nonviolent rebellion can now stop  
climate breakdown and social collapse

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# F o r e w o r d

I was there. For the past 20 years. Climate activism. It didn't work.

We protested in our hundreds of millions – it didn't work.  
We raised billions to reach people and politicians – it didn't work.  
We signed countless online petitions – they didn't work.  
We looked to the United Nations to resolve the crisis – it didn't work.  
We trusted progressive politicians and their reforms – it didn't work.  
Al Gore had a big concert and a PR campaign – it didn't work.  
Countless NGOs did their best – it didn't work.

I worked with green NGOs' campaigns, champagne environmentalists and lying politicians. I was wasting my time. I had a clue back in 2007 that there might be a fundamental flaw with the reformist approach. The problem of the political influence of the industrial billionaires like the Koch Brothers and other fossil fuel bosses.

It was another warm night in Los Angeles. I was invited to an exclusive event. A Tesla Roadster prototype was going to be shown to press and guests. We took turns to ride around the block. I watched in amazement as the Tesla was at the end of the street in the blink of an eye. With barely a sound. I felt like a caveman seeing a television. Incredible.

Whilst working on a campaign in 2007, I had an idea for how to save the world with a massive music event and a huge fundraising effort, led by celebrities, to fund the biggest PR campaign to save the environment. It would be a huge global event just like Live Aid. I sought out a prominent journalist at the event to tell about my scheme and bask in the glory of his praise. The journalist was Vijay Vaitheeswaran from The Economist, now a life member of The Council of Foreign Relations. After listening carefully to my concept, he smiled and laughed. I was stunned. Laughter? How could I be so wrong?

Vijay wasn't being cruel or unkind. He thought I was naïve. He said, 'The fossil fuel industry has enough money to outspend any public relations campaign you might try by 100 times.' He carried on talking, but I stopped listening. I had my answer. He was right. Crestfallen, I sheepishly nodded and walked away.

Over the next 12 years I watched as fossil fuel companies used their vast financial capital to buy political parties, tricked NGOs into fruitless schemes like the US Cap and Trade initiative, sowed doubt about climate science in the public discourse and slowed policy reform to a snail's pace. Their strategy worked. As climate scepticism continued to spread, climate change mitigation dropped down voters' priorities. With Putin and Trump in power, it was over. I quit climate campaigning.

Then I heard about Extinction Rebellion closing five bridges in London. Then they closed central London in April 2019. This was something different. I met Roger Hallam and he explained his ideas for a radical plan to create real change, this included:

First – *Tell the truth*. Climate scepticism was pushed by the mainstream media which spread doubt on climate science like a plague, leaving inaction in its wake. The scale of the crisis is being played down and we must get the truth out.

Second – *Nonviolent civil disobedience*. We need to get arrested, tens of thousands of us. More. No more protests or petitions. Instead, nonviolent civil disobedience, lots of it and on a large scale. Close down cities until the politicians take action. Or until the people do.

Third – *Universalism*. In other words, the ecological and climate crisis should not be owned by any political ideology, culture, age or gender. As Roger Hallam says, we all have a stake in the future, we should all be allowed to engage in action.

I was convinced. We need a new approach to save ourselves and the planet. We need to spark a worldwide Rebellion.

We need some Common Sense for the 21st Century.

*Anonymous climate activist*