

Youth Survival Manifesto

NOTE: A manifesto is a public declaration of a group's goal, analysis, and strategy. This document is intended as a starting point for the manifestos that youth leaders may soon wish to produce. It is written from the youth perspective and assumes that the young have become fully aware of their existential predicament.

1. PREAMBLE

We, the young, have been ecologically betrayed. Older generations have a clear ethical responsibility to protect the environment for our present and future well-being, but the natural world is now being ruthlessly destroyed. The international community vowed decades ago to maintain greenhouse gas concentrations at safe levels, but concentrations have risen disastrously, and the resulting global heat now poses an existential threat.

We know that, as a result of this betrayal, we will suffer intensely and in many cases perish well before our time. We are also convinced that, under current political conditions, nothing of any significance will be done before the crisis spins out of human control. In brief, we understand that we have been abandoned to a grim ecological fate.

Based on this understanding, we have lost faith in the capitalist class and its allies as our social leaders. Although they have long known about the unfolding catastrophe, they have continued with business as usual to protect their power and privileges.

We therefore demand that they be replaced by leaders who will rationally tackle the crisis we face. To give us a chance at ecological survival, we demand revolutionary change.

WE REFUSE TO BE PASSIVELY SLAUGHTERED. We refuse to follow our morally corrupt leaders and their compliant supporters down the path of ecological destruction. We will fight to the last breath for our future, the future of our species, and the future of life on Earth.

We desperately ask all ethical and compassionate people to stand with us in this life-and-death struggle.

2. THEIR LIES AND OUR TRUTHS

Today's monstrous inaction on the ecological crisis is possible only because the capitalist class and its supporters have spun a web of lies to disorient and misdirect the environmentally concerned. The door to rational action will remain closed until these falsehoods have been exposed and refuted. We therefore begin by replacing their most damaging lies with our respective truths.

LIE #1: The ecological crisis is climate change, which was caused by greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

TRUTH #1: The crisis is *ecological overshoot*, which was caused by the over-expansion of the global capitalist economy. This resulted in the violation of multiple environmental limits starting around 1950. Climate change, properly defined, is just one aspect of this far broader and deeper environmental disaster.

LIE #2: "Global warming" and "climate change" are synonymous, hence interchangeable.

TRUTH #2: These terms denote causally related but distinct phenomena. "Global warming" refers to the rising temperature of the Earth's surface due primarily to increased GHG concentrations. "Climate change" refers to alterations in the world's climates as a result of this warming. Global warming is thus the cause, and climate change is one of its effects. This also implies that "climate change" is an inaccurate term for the full range of GHG-based impacts. We therefore use "GHG crisis" instead.

As young people who are desperately trying to escape the calamity we face, we are appalled that these and other terms have been compromised. We are reminded of George Orwell's *Newspeak*, which shaped and simplified the language so as to make non-compliant thought impossible. The modified strategy here is to muddle the core vocabulary in order to prevent meaningful discourse and fundamental change.

LIE #3: The rational aim for the GHG crisis is net-zero emissions.

TRUTH #3: Decades ago the rational aim was to maintain safe GHG concentrations, as stipulated in the [UNFCCC agreement](#) - an international treaty that was ratified by 197 countries in 1994. Because the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) effectively nullified this agreement a year later by shifting the goal to emissions reductions, these levels have been greatly exceeded. Because it is physically impossible to reduce concentrations to safe levels in time for our survival, the rational aim today is direct global cooling, which will require massive solar radiation management (SRM). *We interpret the mainstream's dismissal of this indispensable solution as a genocidal assault on our generation.*

Another critical factor is that fossil-fuel emissions contain cooling aerosols, which are removed from the atmosphere when emissions are reduced. *We are outraged that this well-known effect is consistently neglected or downplayed by mainstream climate science.*

LIE #4: Reducing consumption and population levels can be ignored in the reduction of environmental impacts.

TRUTH #4: These measures must be implemented quickly and equitably. Any environmental impact is driven by three factors: consumption, population, and efficiencies. To significantly reduce the impacts, efficiencies must rise as rapidly as is technically feasible (hence irrespective of the profit motive), and in the rich world both consumption and population levels must decline as rapidly as is socially feasible.

LIE #5: The IPCC is a scientific organization.

TRUTH #5: The IPCC is a political organization with a scientific facade.

No scientific organization would shift its attention from the underlying problem of unsafe GHG concentrations to the problem's emissions-based increments. No scientific body would fail to reassess its strategic approach if its results were unsatisfactory, as the IPCC's have clearly been: over its 34-year tenure the atmosphere's CO2 level has risen by about 65 ppm, at an accelerating pace. Despite this, the organization has never questioned its emissions fixation.

Based on this illogical and dishonest behavior we have concluded that, although we respect the empirical research of its associated scientists, the IPCC itself is a political body. Its designated roles are to attract the environmentally concerned by acknowledging the GHG crisis and opposing denialism, and then to divert them from any solutions that might threaten capitalism or growth. *This attract-and-divert tactic, on an existential issue, fills us with revulsion and rage.*

LIE #6: The ecological crisis can be solved through government policies and political will.

TRUTH #6: The hardest lesson we have learned is that social leadership is exercised not by the people or their governments, but by those who control the economy: the capitalist ruling class and its state. These forces cannot be voted out of office, and they impose strict limits on government action. Having overcome the deceptive propaganda we have absorbed all our lives, we now understand that the people are not sovereign, and that any workable strategy must explicitly recognize this fact.

Our overall conclusion is this: The fundamental requirement for our ecological survival is not political will within the prevailing social order, but the political power to create a new and sustainable social order.

3. OUR DEMANDS

Based on the above truths, we make the following demands. We will militantly assert these until our ecological survival is ensured.

DEMAND #1: Replace the capitalist class as social leaders

The capitalist class must be replaced by a group that is fully committed to a sustainable world. After examining the political structure of capitalist societies we have determined that the military is the only force that can achieve this end in the time available. We are dismayed that military intervention is necessary, but there is no feasible alternative at this late stage.

Military intervention could be either indirect or direct. Indirect intervention would apply if a mature civilian group is available. In that case the military could support this group while keeping itself on the sidelines. If such a group has not appeared, the military would have to assume political power itself. In that case it should relinquish power as soon as a qualified civilian group is prepared to assume control.

We fully understand that military intervention and a revolutionary shift will cause profound social disruption. However, the betrayal and inaction of recent decades have convinced us that this is our only road to survival.

DEMAND #2: Initiate measures for rapid global cooling

The first responsibility of the new social leadership will be to rapidly cool the planet to maintain a livable environment. The most critical measure is SRM to reflect solar radiation. This should be implemented on a multilateral basis if possible, but unilateral action may well be necessary.

We acknowledge that the environmental risks associated with SRM are real and serious. However, these risks must be assessed in the context of our threatened future. Conventional discussions typically ignore this threat and thus falsify the assessment. In our view a rational mix of SRM measures must be implemented as quickly as is technically feasible while minimizing the potential damage to humankind and nature.

Although we have to date assumed that ruling-class replacement will precede SRM, the urgency imposed by recent extreme weather events could force a reversal of this sequence. Emergency SRM by a non-state group could galvanize the concerned and instigate political revolution. The unifying slogan for our first two demands is therefore: ***SRM triggers revolution, or revolution permits SRM.***

DEMAND #3: Transform ecocidal economies

Once new social leaders are in place and global cooling has begun, work must immediately begin on the transition from capitalism and other expansionary systems to sustainable economies.

The main conceptual requirement for this transition is a new economic theory. Given the severe time constraints, we propose an independent framework, the [Economics of Needs and Limits](#) (ENL), as the starting point for this theory's development.

The exact nature of a sustainable economy cannot be foreseen. Because global overshoot is unprecedented, humankind is facing a sharp historical discontinuity. This means that our species cannot move towards a predefined system such as socialism or ecosocialism. Instead we must move away from capitalism under the guidance of sustainable economic principles. A post-capitalist economy will therefore be the unknowable outcome of a rapid, organic, and theory-driven process.

DEMAND #4: Restore environmental health

Our fourth demand is to return the global environment to a healthy state insofar as this is feasible. This will entail three broad initiatives: restoring the Earth's energy balance, rationalizing the use of natural sources and sinks, and rehabilitating damaged ecosystems. This demand is last because these projects are incompatible with capitalism's economic logic. It is therefore necessary to begin the economic transition and to supersede this logic before they can be seriously undertaken.

As a general statement, ***our species must quickly establish its optimum level of planetary impact.*** Some impact is necessary for our survival and life enjoyment, but too much is ecologically fatal. Humankind has overshoot the Earth's natural limits and must now locate the delicate balance between the sufficient and the sustainable.

4. POSTSCRIPT

The ecological crisis is ultimately an ethical issue. This assertion goes well beyond the standard recognition that the global rich are its primary cause and the global poor its primary victims.

Past revolutions have succeeded when material interests were effectively aligned with revolutionary ends. For the ecological crisis this motivation is absent: material interests lead us away from rather than towards ecological salvation. The main impetus to fundamental change must therefore lie in the ethical realm. A critical mass of people, in positions of sufficient power, authority, and influence, must override their personal comforts for the sake of the young, the poor, and life on Earth. Can they rise to this challenge?

For the capitalist class and its allies this question has already been answered. Not only have they failed to respond rationally to ecological overshoot, they have cruelly blocked effective action. A split remains possible as the crisis worsens, but to date this class has been a deeply amoral group.

For the compliant supporters of this class and its ecocidal economy, the answer will soon be evident. To date they have disseminated the mainstream's lies and refused to develop the intellectual infrastructure for a sustainable society. But some pangs of conscience are perhaps being felt, and an ethical reassessment may be under way. If so, they should understand that time is short and the crisis won't wait.

For the military the question has yet to be posed. Its professional responsibility is to safeguard the populace from existential threats, but it mistakenly believes that this can be achieved under capitalist leadership. We must therefore awaken this critical force to today's environmental and political realities. The military must then decide if will honor its core commitments, or if its loyalties will remain with the destructive masters it presently serves.

Our generation faces immense challenges as well. In the rich world we have a strong material interest in capitalist affluence and thus the ecocidal status quo. This must be courageously overcome. Related to this is the siren call of progressivism, a movement with humane values that restricts itself to system reforms when system replacement is clearly required. For revolutionary purposes we must either shift this movement to militancy or abandon it. We must also learn to distinguish between friend and foe among our elders. Many are complicit in the cataclysm we face, but others are eager to help us influence the military and to share their knowledge and experience as we seek a sustainable world.

Our final challenge, should it come, will be the most daunting. If the military fails to respond constructively in a timeframe that is consistent with our ecological survival, we will seek political power ourselves. Facing a terrifying future and left with no other choice, we will shift from persuasion and agitation to outright insurrection.

We will not be passively slaughtered!