FULL SPECTRUM RESISTANCE

VOLUME ONE

BUILDING MOVEMENTS AND FIGHTING TO WIN

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To those who struggle; with solidarity and gratitude.

CHAPTER 1

Why We Fight

"I know the one thing we did right / was the day we started to fight."
—"Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," civil rights anthem

"We are never assured of justice without a fight."
—Angela Davis

I WROTE THIS BOOK BECAUSE WE ARE LOSING. The global exploitation of the poor is accelerating even as the rich grow wealthier than at any point in history. The fertile planet that keeps us all alive is being poisoned, baked, and stripped bare. Remaining Indigenous and traditional people continue to be attacked and pushed off their lands so that the rich can exploit resources that will be exhausted in a few decades anyway. We are losing and we need to learn how to win, fast.

I've been a social and ecological justice activist for two decades. In that time, I've worked on waste reduction and recycling projects, organized with anti-poverty community groups, and marched (or sat in jail) at summit protests. I've helped start a community garden and organic farming operations. I've written four books, and given speeches to both academics and angry crowds. I've been a union organizer and a farm organizer. I've worked with militant conservation groups using direct confrontation and civil disobedience. I've developed a broad perspective on political action that comes from using many different tactics in many different campaigns.

But the truth is that in almost every campaign I have worked on in my life, we have lost ground. In ecological campaigns like forest defense,

that's been literally true. In anti-poverty campaigns, it's reflected in the ever-growing gap between rich and poor. This is not only my experience, but the experience of many activists working on many different issues. In areas where I do feel like progress has been made—say, queer rights—there is a constant threat of backlash and backsliding. The gains we have won rest on a temporary and unstable foundation; we cannot expect to win long-term human rights from a society that is based on flagrant ecological unsustainability.

If we want to reverse this tide of losses, we must speak honestly to each other about the situation we are in, and about its severity. We must speak about why we have been losing and what that means for the future.

This book is about what makes for effective action. It is about how to organize effective resistance movements. If we want to make social change and defend a habitable biosphere, we must unflinchingly examine those tendencies (especially those on the left) that have made us ineffective. I will dissect some of these pernicious predispositions in the pages to come.

Some of these barriers to action are misconceptions about how power works in society. The left in general has been naïve about the effectiveness of "moral suasion."[1] Too many people have clung to the faith in government that "good citizens" are supposed to have. We often work under the assumption that those in power will be convinced to stop their atrocities if we offer them a good example or a well-reasoned argument.

Historically, this is nearly unheard of.

The unfortunate reality is that most people in power—whether in political office or a corporate boardroom—benefit greatly from their status and have been trained not to question the power structures that put them there. Further, when we try to make social change we rarely deal with thinking and compassionate *individuals* who can be persuaded by moral example. We deal with large, abstract social machines: corporations and corporate-structured governments. You can't persuade a machine. In the social machine of the profitable corporation, the anomalously compassionate individual is merely a defective component to be replaced by the bosses or shareholders.

We have failed to think and act strategically. We've based so many of our campaigns on the idea that those in power will stop exploiting people

and destroying the planet if only they can be educated out of a few minor mistakes. This is a comforting myth for those who might otherwise feel powerless. But it is a myth we cannot afford to cling to any longer. By allowing those in power to determine the agenda and the timetable for change we have given up the initiative, and we have failed to develop appropriate strategy ourselves.

We need resistance movements. If we want to become effective at combating runaway climate change and countless other injustices, thinking people on the left must stop acting like "the loyal opposition" and start acting like a real resistance force. We have to learn from the strategies and resistance movements of the past.

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I began my activist career as a young liberal environmentalist. I was the founding president of my environment club in elementary school. I gave speeches about saving the whales. I wrote and acted in a play about the dangers of environmental destruction, in which a selfish CEO was sent to the future to face the consequences of his acts. Our group set up composters, sold reusable Tupperware lunch kits so that people could reduce their waste, and raised money to adopt acres of the Amazon rainforest.

I knew these were small gestures, but as a young person I believed that if we could just convince and educate enough people we would turn things around.

When I was in high school, our environmental club ran a bottle-and-can-recycling program. There wasn't a proper municipal recycling program in place yet, so we had to sort and wash the bottles ourselves and arrange for their pick up. Other students—ignoring our polite signs and pleas to be neat—would dump half-full pop bottles and garbage into our clearly marked recycling bins. Friday night after school was the time to organize and wash the week's bottles and cans. We would hose off the bins as we picked out plastic straws and soggy napkins. The spray generated a fine aerosol mist, a dilute fog of high-fructose corn syrup. I remember the way it stuck to my skin, how it beaded on my forearms like sugary dew. We didn't care—we did it for the planet.

Late one spring another environmental group I was part of organized a weekend conference for students. We had speakers on all sorts of subjects: water quality, solar power, boycotting Nestlé, and the benefits of growing hemp. But the presentation I remember most clearly—the people I will never forget—was from a group from the Ojibwe community of Grassy Narrows (*Asabiinyashkosiwagong Nitam-Anishinaabeg*). They were—by rather loose northern Ontario standards—our neighbors, although they had driven for ten hours to come to our conference.

The Grassy Narrows representatives were of many different ages. The younger people went swimming with us in chilly little lakes. The older people were their speakers; they told us the story of their community, and of how it had been poisoned.

Like most of northern Ontario, the land around Grassy Narrows had been forest since the last ice age. Industrial activity—especially logging and the associated pulp and paper mills—metastasized into the area after World War II. In the 1950s, Grassy Narrows' territory was flooded by the government for hydroelectric dams, forcing people to relocate.

In 1962, the Dryden Chemical Company opened a chloralkali plant nearby. The chloralkali plant was built to produce sodium hydroxide and chlorine for bleaching paper. This process is energy intensive—hence the hydroelectric dams—but the factory also used large amounts of mercury for processing, and its effluent was dumped directly into the river system.

If you look at a satellite photo of northwestern Ontario you will see two things: forests and lakes. In the area around Grassy Narrows there are thousands upon thousands of lakes and islands. There is hardly a place that can't be reached by canoe and paddle.

So for a very long time the people of Grassy Narrows had relied on fish for food. When the reservations were imposed and settlers moved in, many Ojibwe used their excellent fishing skills as a source of income. They had to deal with the flooding of their land, with racism and relocation, and with the horrors of the residential schools. But there were always fish.

In the late 1960s, people in Grassy Narrows (and neighboring Whitedog First Nation) started to get sick. Some of them had trouble speaking. Their hearing and vision began to fail. Walking became difficult. Their hands

began to shake with tremors. People who had expertly tied the tiniest knots in fishing line for decades could barely tie their own shoelaces.

It soon became clear that mercury was the culprit. Doctors brought in from Japan identified the illness as Minamata disease, a form of severe mercury poisoning named after the city in Japan where a similar mass poisoning had been caused by a different factory. In 1970, the government forbid the Dryden Chemical Company to release mercury into the water, though it continued to be released into the air.

The chloralkali plant dumped at least nine thousand kilograms of mercury into the water between 1962 and 1970.[2] The Dryden Chemical Company shut down in 1976. But the poisoning of the land was permanent. Contamination extended through the waterways more than 250 kilometers downstream over an enormous watershed.[3] Cleanup was essentially impossible—there is simply no way to remove that much mercury from such a large area.[4] It wasn't just humans and fish affected, of course. The many lakes and rivers are home to wild rice, waterfowl, amphibians, beavers and other living creatures.

Grassy Narrows won a financial settlement sixteen years after the mercury poisoning was identified. The total amount was a mere $10,000 per person, meant to compensate them for the destruction of the land base and, in many cases, their own bodies.[5] But very little of that paltry amount actually made it to members of the community. Bureaucratic red tape was an obstacle.[6] So were Band Councils, supposedly representative bodies which have been imposed on First Nations by the Canadian government, but which are often dysfunctional and which many Indigenous people despise as tools of colonialism.

In recent decades, contamination of the waterways has been worsened by clear-cutting around Grassy Narrows which caused major soil erosion. Mercury that had been immobilized in the soil was washed back into the waterways.[7] One of the major struggles at Grassy Narrows became the fight to stop clear-cutting on their lands, clear-cutting sanctioned and licensed by the state.

The visitors from Grassy Narrows explained these things to us. They explained how the government continued to ignore their needs, and continued to destroy their land and water, despite every reasonable and polite

attempt by the Ojibwe to assert themselves. I don't remember them using the words *racism* or *genocide*, but both were clearly at work.

The conference ended. The settler students went back to their homes, and the Indigenous to theirs. The next Friday came, and it was time to wash the recycling again. I remember the afternoon clearly. It was hot, which made the cloud of fructose spray even stickier. I pulled a used napkin out of a juice bottle for the umpteenth time. But instead of throwing it in the trash, I paused. I stared at its bleached white fibers. And I began to understand why our environmental activism wasn't working.

That napkin helped me to grasp that environmental destruction wasn't really about lack of education. It wasn't about misunderstandings. It wasn't about technology that was more (or less) damaging. It was about power.

Somewhere not far away was a group of Indigenous people I had sat with, eaten with, spoken with, whose vast land base had been poisoned and clear-cut to produce napkins like the one I held in my hand. A napkin which was used for a few minutes—or not at all—and then discarded without thought. The student who had thrown out this napkin didn't do so because they wanted to make a personal choice to destroy someone else's land base. (And if they had individually refused to use that napkin it would have made no visible difference.) They did it because they were part of a *system* of power, a system in which they benefited from the destruction of someone else's land. And in which they had the privilege to be totally ignorant of that impact. They had power.

Our Indigenous friends, in contrast, had very little power in the economic and political systems of colonial Canada. Worse than that, the very *existence* of Canada was due to the fact that their lands, and the lands of many cultures, had been stolen. (Most of Canada consists of land which was unceded, or for which treaties were coerced, or for which treaties were signed but not honored by settlers.)

Our environmental group had not gained very much traction with the student body. Before that conference I had believed that with enough hard work, public education, and awareness-raising we could convince people to give up some of their convenience and privilege to save the planet. But I began to grasp that perhaps we had it backward: it was their power and privilege that allowed them to *ignore* public education. They didn't care

about environmental awareness because it was someone else's land they were destroying. They could always pretend that things were fine, because they would never be the ones who had to suffer the consequences of their actions—at least, not until it was too late.

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Later, I went for a walk in the woods to think things over. There was a long narrow strip of forest near our school, braided with little paths. It stretched alongside three different schools—our high school at one end, my elementary school in the middle, a university at the far end. I walked by a fenced-off little cemetery in the woods, long abandoned, which I had passed many times before.

At the far end of the path were a few boarded-up old buildings. Near one, which looked like a chapel, was a plaque I had never been close enough to read before. On inspection, it informed me that I was standing on the site of a former residential school (founded as a mission in 1832). At first I believed the plaque referred to the little chapel, and then realized the plaque referred to the main four-story building of the university. I had been in that building hundreds of times without ever realizing *why* it had been built.

As I went back into the woods to walk home I passed the cemetery again, and felt a chill. I went in through a little gate for the first time, and began to read the names and dates on the rough headstones. The birth and death dates were so close together: they were only children. The cemetery I'd walked past so many times was full of children who had been taken from their families, from their culture, and who had died in the residential school. I fell to my knees with tears in my eyes.

There was a reservation twenty minutes by car from where I lived. They knew all of the things I took so long to learn. But I had never been there, and I had never met anyone who lived there. It was a kind of de facto segregation. (One of my teachers explained that South African officials visited Canada when they were setting up apartheid so they could model it after the reservation system here.)

For a long time I had believed that stopping the destruction of the

planet was a matter of correcting misunderstandings about the planet and of choosing better technologies. But I was learning that Canadian culture—the existence of Canada—was built on a foundation of atrocity. Education alone could not correct a political arrangement that was so fundamentally rotten. I began to understand something about how power worked. And so I started to grasp a bit of radical politics.

At the time I didn't really understand the implications of this. I lacked an adequate grounding in the history of social change, and there weren't many other proto-radicals around to discuss it with. But I wanted to understand. To find those people. To make actual change. To resist.

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There's a difference between dissidence and resistance. A dissident believes that those in power are acting badly, that society is unjust, but a dissident doesn't materially try to stop those things. Their primary activity is *believing* and sharing their beliefs with others. Resisters put their beliefs into action. They work to disrupt or dismantle the social, economic, and political systems that cause injustice and exploitation.

If we want to have a livable future, we need to move beyond dissidence to real resistance. And we must understand the kinds of tactics that resistance movements use to win.

The mainstream left in Canada, the United States, and much of the industrialized world has allowed itself to be whittled down to two main tactics: electoral politics and "ethical" consumerism.[8] If someone hands me a leaflet or emails me a call to action, I can be almost certain that it will tell me either to write to my "elected representative," or to "vote with my dollar" by purchasing some supposedly moral product, or both. You could add a third main tactic—awareness raising—but the intention is usually to drive people to either change their vote or their buying habits.[9]

It is no surprise that these are the tactics that remain. Government and capitalism are the two most powerful systems in society, and these tactics are intended to appeal to them. But these tactics also offer very little leverage and—for reasons I will discuss—have rarely achieved any gains alone.

By limiting ourselves to these tactics, we ignore the vast repertoire of tactics available to us. We also doom ourselves to ineffectiveness, and being ineffective further undermines our ability to mobilize action and recruit new activists.

The truth—so difficult to accept for those of us raised in the tradition of the liberal left—is that good examples and cogent arguments alone have never stopped exploitation or upset entrenched systems of injustice. They have not done that in the past, and they will not do it now. What we need is to mobilize political force and to confront injustice directly. In other words, to fight.

The idea of fighting back makes the liberal left deeply uncomfortable. This is because the liberal left identifies so closely with those in power—and sees itself as part of those power structures, the "loyal opposition."[10] Those who break that loyalty lose the privileges that come with the position.

The liberal left is also uncomfortable with fighting back because it has developed a mythology of social change that bears little resemblance to reality, but I'll come back to that.

Like many grassroots activists, I have grown extremely frustrated with the timidity of liberals when it comes to confronting systems of oppression. Not only because they *should* be fighting back, but because in fearfulness they hold others back.

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A few years ago I was part of a large grassroots campaign involving prisons and agriculture. It began when the federal government of Canada decided to shut down the six prison farms in the country. Those were farms that operated on prisons, where prisoners produced food for their fellow prisoners, got experience, and worked with plants and animals. Everyone we spoke to on the inside told us that the prison farms were valuable for prisoners and that working on the farms (a sought-after position) helped them to cope with their circumstances. The prison farm program also paid for itself through the food produced.

But the Conservative government decided to shut the prison farms

down as part of their "tough on crime" agenda. They wanted to scrap rehabilitation programs, criminalize more people for minor lawbreaking, lengthen sentences, and build larger "super-jails" to accommodate all of the new prisoners this would create. Cramming huge numbers of people into tiny cells without any access to social programs would supposedly increase public safety.

It quickly became clear that the Conservative plan to shut down the prison farms had nothing to do with them being "cost effective." Rather, they wanted to get rid of a program that was actually offering some benefit to inmates, because they felt that prisoners did not "deserve" to work with plants and animals or to go outside. The prison farms, in other words, did not function as a source of punishment. Farmwork was "coddling" the prisoners.

Prisons are big business. The Conservative prison plan meant that billions and billions of dollars would be spent on building new prisons, new security technology, and guard wages, along with feeding and clothing additional inmates. This money would go to the corporations that make up the prison-industrial complex—corporations that profit from human suffering and the destruction of human communities. Those companies would use their profits to lobby for even more criminalization.

Two of Canada's six prison farms are at Kingston, Ontario, the city nearest to me. One of them is on eight hundred acres of land in the middle of Kingston. It's been called the largest urban farm in North America. On its four sides it is bordered by a sprawling factory, a commercial strip, a residential area, and a large network of sensitive wetlands. It was apparent that if the farm was closed the next step would be for the government to take that land and build a superprison or simply sell it for development.[11]

Kingston has a strong local food movement, thanks to the progressive National Farmers Union, and awareness of fossil-fuel issues and climate change, so a lot of people understood that this farmland in the middle of the city was invaluable and could even keep people from going hungry in the future. After the planned closure was announced, a group of farmers and social justice activists tried to convince the government to reconsider. They spent a year trying to meet with government officials, organizing letter-writing campaigns and petitions. They explained how valuable the

prison farms were both in terms of food security and as a form of rehabilitation—that they wanted to see people released from prison "healed and not hardened." The government made no substantive response, aside from the occasional insult.

Frustrated at government stonewalling, some of the organizers decided it might be time to escalate to civil disobedience, and so they brought me in to the core group. Civil disobedience, like all forms of resistance, is more effective when organized, and we required specific things to undertake civil disobedience. We needed to gather intelligence to identify points of leverage. The main site was a dairy farm with hundreds of cows and only one main access road—if they tried to move out cattle or equipment, we could blockade that road with our bodies. So we needed to be able to watch the farm for signs that equipment was being moved out. We needed to know who was available to show up and be arrested, and when, on a twenty-four-hour basis. We needed robust ways of mobilizing hundreds of people in minutes. For a blockade we would need communications, lawyers, civil disobedience training for the participants, and so on.

As we began to put that organization in place we held a big event to mark the shift in the campaign. Author Margaret Atwood—among the most renowned figures on the Canadian left—joined us to speak. My job was to give a speech that would lay out the rationale for civil disobedience, along with a bit of its history, and explain how it fit into the campaign.

In the minutes before the event began, several organizers and close supporters came up to me and said things like "make sure to emphasize that it is *nonviolent* civil disobedience" or "make sure to say *peaceful* civil disobedience" and so on. If I had taken every bit of last-minute advice that was pressed upon me, I would have been speaking on "passive nonviolent peaceful democratic civil disobedience." Some organizers were nervous and wanted to make the shift in strategy seem as polite and nonthreatening as possible.

The venue, a big old limestone church, was soon completely full. Eight hundred people were seated inside and more waiting outside. This was an enormous turnout for a political rally in a small city.

A few others spoke before me, so when it was my turn on the stage the crowd was already enthusiastic. But as soon as I mentioned the pos-

sibility of physically blockading trucks, the entire audience burst into applause. I hadn't yet explained how civil disobedience worked or why it was important. They already got it.

Not because they were all familiar with that history. But because they understood that if powerful people are threatening your community—if they are bullying people, if they are ignoring you when their job is supposedly to listen—then, well, more polite requests aren't going to cut it. It wasn't some deep philosophical revelation. It was common sense. This was an important moment in my understanding of the campaign. The crowd's enthusiastic response came in part because they *weren't* as immersed in a liberal culture as some of the organizers. (The willingness of everyone involved in the prison farm struggle to persist and escalate would eventually lead to a win after a nine-year campaign.)

In stories or movies about resistance, the leaders are always the brave ones, willing to take risks and giving their communities the courage to stand up for themselves and to fight back. That, after all, is what *makes* them leaders.

But in real-world organizing on the left, I've often seen the opposite. Those in leadership or organizing positions, afraid of alienating their sympathizers or (more importantly to some) their funders, often take the *least* confrontational position they can. They adopt the politics of the lowest-common-denominator, which means little danger of conflict—and little risk of success. Again and again, I have seen liberal "leaders" who instead of demonstrating initiative and bravery actually hold back the people they are supposed to be leading. People of influence who discourage action and escalation in situations where it is clearly needed.

Longtime civil disobedience organizer George Lakey tells the story of how he was invited by a progressive coalition in Washington, D.C., to design a set of nonviolence protests for them. He recounts: "My first question to the group of national leaders was: 'Where is the rebel energy in your coalition?' Silence followed. Finally, they began reciting the story of when various militant groups had left the coalition in disillusionment. In short, there was no rebel energy left. 'In that case,' I said, 'this will be a short meeting.'"[12] He left.

Our ideologies are supposed to be liberating and empowering. They

are supposed to make us more capable of defending our communities and building new ones. But too often they do the opposite. People grow encumbered by their ideas instead of empowered.

In the modern left those in leadership positions are often the most strongly enculturated with liberal ideas. They want to follow in the footsteps of people like Martin Luther King or Nelson Mandela, but they often do not know the details of the movements they want to emulate.

Obviously none of this is meant to impugn the people I organized with during the prison farm campaign, who were intelligent, serious, and dedicated. This is a comment on the culture of the left as a whole, which—though it often idolizes certain figures—has largely forgotten the specifics of those historic strategies and tactical choices.

This cultural amnesia is an enormous loss, and it means that the left in general has lost its bearings. You can't tell where you're going unless you know where you've been. Furthermore, that history of struggle is profoundly useful for our modern-day struggles. It is a library from which we can draw strategies and tactics. It is a deep well that can offer us inspiration and spiritual renewal. And it is an armory from which we can obtain the tools we need to defend human and ecological communities.

The loss of this cultural legacy has not been an accident. It has not just been passively forgotten, but actively dismissed and buried, by those on both the left and the right.

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When the people from Grassy Narrows visited our conference, they did so as part of a broader public awareness campaign. In the years since I met them they dealt with worsening logging on their lands, with the continued (and worsening) legacy of mercury poisoning, and with the closure of fishing areas.

The community has often been under boil water advisories because of contaminated water. This is not an uncommon problem: at this writing there are 122 Indigenous communities in Canada which lack safe drinking water, many for well over a decade. In some the water is simply too toxic to consume even if it has been boiled, and bottled water must be shipped

in. The government claims that it is too expensive to fix the water supply in sometimes remote areas. But how many millions and billions of dollars' worth of lumber, oil, and other resources have been extracted from these "remote areas" without Indigenous permission or compensation?

Grassy Narrows spent decades trying to address worsening assaults on their community and land by raising public awareness and lobbying. They had meetings with the government, protests, petitions, letter writing, and legal challenges. They got no substantive response.

So they turned to direct action. In 2002, they set up a blockade on the biggest logging road into their territory. And it worked. Joe Fobister, a trapper and community activist from Grassy Narrows, explains: "I'm through with begging. My people have been begging for the last 130 years, since the treaty was signed, and it hasn't gotten them anything. And they'll continue to get nothing. . . . I believe we have power . . . when we take our fight off the reserve boundary and take it out on the land, nobody, not the government, has intervened. So that's the message: they're afraid of us."[13]

Initially, logging companies Abitibi and Weyerhaeuser continued to log by accessing other roads. So the people of Grassy Narrows used temporary rotating blockades on those other roads as well. By 2008 the community had successfully stopped all outside logging on their territory. And the action had direct economic impact on the logging companies responsible for clear-cutting their land. The newspaper of the nearby mill town Kenora (the *Daily Miner*) described the situation in late 2010: "Since 2002, the pulp mill at Kenora has died and been demolished. The stud mill has been idled indefinitely and the Weyerhaeuser plant continues to hang on by its fingernails, as it struggles with the collapse of the American housing market, as well as uncertainties with its wood suppliers."[14]

The Grassy Narrows blockade, still in place, is now the longest-running Indigenous anti-logging blockade in Canada's history.[15] Direct action works.

The left can learn a lot from that, but it had better learn fast.

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In North America and around the world, more and more people are getting tired of the status quo on the left. Some of these are older people

who yearn to recapture the fighting spirit they remember from years past. Some of them are young people already fed up with the obvious failures and timidity of established progressives in the face of global disaster. Some of them are working-class people tired of elected officials who promise change you can believe in, only to bow to corporate interests even as their economic greed weighs heavier and heavier on the poor. Some are part of a tradition of resistance who have reinvented their struggle in new forms like Black Lives Matter and Idle No More.

They all know that time is running out. And they are ready to fight.

So why do we fight? Why *must* we fight?

We fight because you can't persuade a dictator, a sociopath, or a corporation. Mass exploitation is not a mistake or a misunderstanding, and evil is very profitable. As Frederick Douglass (escaped slave and abolitionist orator) famously said: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will."

Revolutionary author Gene Sharp understands this. Sharp has written extensively on how nonviolent action works, and his writings have been used in a number of actual revolutions. Sharp's work makes it clear that nonviolent mass movements work by mobilizing political force, not by persuading the exploiters. He warns against the dangers of dialogue with those who would only use negotiations to distract or defuse resistance. He argues that in order to win, those fighting against authoritarians must "create a powerful internal resistance force."[16]

Anarchist Michael Albert understands this, too. Examining what was lost in leftist culture since the 1960s, Albert explains: "Something went wrong with the slogan 'speak truth to power,' too. 'Speak truth to power' does not mean try and convince power by the logic of your truth. If it means that, it's a slogan we should dump, because power doesn't listen to logic. Power doesn't give a damn about truth. The phrase just meant stand up with the truth and assert yourself with it. But somehow it got screwed up into 'speak truth *to* power.' Spend a lot of time trying to convince power of what the truth is. But that's a total waste of time. Power only responds to raising social costs, to force, basically."[17]

Force is not the same thing as violence. There are many different

kinds of force. There is *economic force*: workers can go on strike, businesses can be boycotted, trade and transport systems can be disrupted, and economic systems rooted in justice can be built. There is *political force*: organized voting can be a form of political force, but political force can also include noncooperation with the establishment and the creation of oppositional political systems, from neighborhood assemblies to revolutionary congresses. There is *social force*: people can shun those responsible for atrocities, can impose social penalties on those who collaborate, and can organize social movements that value defiance and the upholding of human and ecological rights.

And there is the use of *physical force*. Mass noncooperation actions where people put their bodies on the line, from lunch-counter sit-ins to port blockades, are expressions of physical force. They physically impede bad things from happening. Strategies of physical force differ. They may be explicitly nonviolent. They may encourage self-defense. They may even accept physical counterattacks on those in power. In any case, successful resistance movements have the ability to use physical force. In history, this usually includes the capacity for violence, if only in self-defense.

It is especially important for those who embrace nonviolence to understand this point. As Gene Sharp writes: "Nonviolent action is a means of combat, as is war. It involves the matching of forces and the waging of 'battle,' requires wise strategy and tactics, and demands of its 'soldiers' courage, discipline, and sacrifice."[18] Nonviolent activist Barbara Deming argued: "The challenge to those who believe in nonviolent struggle is to learn to be aggressive enough."[19]

In any case, when it comes to persuasion, there is little difference between a dictator, a sociopath, and a corporation. Indeed, many thinkers have pointed out that the modern corporation is essentially a sociopath, unmoored as it is from basic empathy and morality.

Those in power profit immensely by exploiting the working class and by stripping the Earth bare. The only way to stop them from doing this is to make exploitation—of people and of the planet—more costly than they can afford. This is one of the fundamental insights needed to undertake effective political action. Many resistance movements have spent (or wasted) decades trying to come to terms with this fact.

William Lloyd Garrison, renowned abolitionist and publisher, abandoned persuasion after many years of fruitless effort, saying in 1840: "There is not any instance recorded, either in sacred or profane history, in which the oppressors and enslavers of mankind, except in individual cases, have been induced by moral suasion, to surrender their despotic power and let the oppressed go free; but in nearly every instance, from the time that Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the Red Sea, down to the present day, they have persisted in their evil course until some sudden destruction came upon them, or they were compelled to surrender their ill-gotten power in some other manner."[20]

On the opposite side, slaveholder James Hammond was equally clear: "If you distilled nectar from your lips and discoursed sweetest music . . . do you imagine you could prevail on us to give up a thousand millions of dollars in the value of our slaves, and a thousand millions of dollars more in the depreciation of our land?"[21]

We fight because we are fighting for survival. The planet is in the midst of an ecological apocalypse. We no longer need to talk about global ecological disasters in the future tense. Ecological collapse is underway, and climate change is our single most urgent global problem.

The critical danger is runaway global warming. The greenhouse effect is not linear, and there is not a one-to-one relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. People tend to think of warming like a thermostat on the wall; turn the greenhouse gases up a little bit, and the planet warms a little bit. But it's more like throwing matches on to the living room sofa; sure, it gets a little warmer at first, but if you don't put out the fire the whole house will go up in flames.

There are planetary tipping points that make global warming accelerate dramatically. As Arctic ice melts, reflective white snow is replaced with dark water that absorbs more sunlight. And Arctic warming is already melting methane on the ocean floor, releasing huge plumes of greenhouse gases that had been safely contained for eons.

International climate accords like those written at Kyoto, Copenhagen, and Paris are woefully inadequate. They would be laughable if the consequences weren't so dire. Not only are they insufficient, they aren't even

being followed. We're already well into the worst-case scenario of global warming projections from only a few years ago. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that decisive and drastic action must be taken by 2030 in order to avoid catastrophic climate change. But even that stark warning has been called "incredibly conservative" by groups like the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change, which point out that the IPCC doesn't take into account runaway climate change tipping points.[22] We must all understand that this scenario—or any massive climate change—would roll back all of the social justice gains we've managed over the last few centuries.

Global warming is a great emergency, but ecological injury is ubiquitous—virtually every biome and ecological indicator is in decline. Ninety percent of big fish have been wiped out in fifty years, with more recent research suggesting it is now past 95 percent. In the middle of the Pacific Ocean there is fifteen times as much plastic as phytoplankton. Soil is being lost twenty times as fast as it can be replenished. Many areas in North America have lost 98 percent of their original topsoil. More than half of tropical forests have been wiped out. The Amazon rainforest, in particular, has its own tipping points. Because the rainforests are so large as to create their own climates, their continued destruction could cause a permanent drought which would spread into the northern hemisphere and "massively accelerate global warming with incalculable consequences . . . a process that might end in the world becoming uninhabitable."[23]

There is a dangerous idea in some circles that to care about the planet is a privilege of the middle class, and that the environment is a secondary consideration to basic human rights. But in reality, the two can't be separated. The human burden of ecocide is carried by the poorest, by Indigenous people, by refugees displaced by climate-induced wars, and especially by women. There will be no human rights—let alone human life—without a habitable biosphere. If we don't stop this destruction we will die, but not before human justice does.

We fight because industrial capitalism is a dead end. If the ecological situation is so awful, people often ask me, why don't we see it in our daily lives? For those of us living in the wealthy industrialized world

the answer is simple: we are insulated from ecological destruction by a sea of cheap oil. We are not aware of the obliteration of topsoil because fossil fuels allow the production of cheap synthetic fertilizers and pesticides that (along with the depletion of fossil aquifers) temporarily increase global food production. We are not aware of the eradication of ocean fishes because cheap energy allows huge fishing fleets (with the help of satellites and spotting planes) to locate and catch the few remaining schools of large fish in the ocean. And so on.

We know that nearly everything about our daily material lives depends on cheap petroleum. Producing a calorie of food energy takes about ten calories of oil. The insulating effects of cheap oil are only temporary.

With the most accessible sources of cheap oil already used up, energy corporations have turned to almost inconceivably destructive new methods: natural gas fracking, the tar sands, mountaintop removal. We have reached the point where maintaining industrial civilization literally means blasting, bulldozing, and grinding the land itself into tiny pieces. These methods may delay industrial collapse, but if not stopped they will doom us to runaway global warming and unimaginable catastrophe.

Industrial civilization cannot last forever; the question is whether anything will be left once it is gone. The sooner collapse happens the better for the planet and those who live after. Part of our job as people who care about justice is to try and minimize the strife of that collapse and segue to low-energy, sustainable, egalitarian societies.

That industrial civilization is a dead end, or that industrial capitalism will collapse, doesn't mean that it will disappear easily. Quite the opposite. Whenever capitalism is on the verge of failure—whenever that Ponzi scheme approaches its limits—the capitalists do whatever they can to prolong it. They will try to shore it up by pillaging the commons that remain, be they physical commons like the ocean or societal commons like social services and health care. They will especially attack unions, the poor, and people of color, as they are doing now. They will resort to wars, which are often good for business. We cannot stand back and hope that the hand of history will shuffle capitalism off the stage without fuss or muss. If we want to avoid a gruesome and prolonged slide into fascism or neo-feudalism, we must fight.

We fight because there's nowhere left to run. Some people say to me: "Sure, I agree that the system is terrible and it's destroying the planet. But it's too big to change. Shouldn't we just build alternative communities and try to weather the storm as best we can?"

I agree that the dominant culture is not going to change—it needs to be disrupted and dismantled. But withdrawal as the sole strategy will fail, because there is nowhere left to run to. The dominant culture is global. Its reach and destructiveness are global. It expands ceaselessly to gobble up land, resources, and cultures.

Let me be very clear that when I say this I am not dismissing the value of building alternatives. I live on an organic family farm. We grow our own food. We restore habitat and build soil. We build local community. All of these are important and worthwhile. But if we can't stop runaway global warming (among other catastrophes) then all of our work, and the land itself, will be destroyed.

The primary problem with the dominant culture is not that it is sinful or corrupt, but that it is unjust and voracious. We must be more than an alternative—we must be an opposition.

Focusing on withdrawal as the primary solution ignores the fact the planet was covered with alternative—that is, Indigenous—cultures for countless millennia. Many or most of these cultures used participatory decision-making and placed a high value on equality and justice. The empires and colonizers have spent many centuries trying to exterminate Indigenous people and steal their land. Historically they did this not with high-altitude bombers and cruise missiles, but face-to-face, by the sword. Yet not a single empire in history was reformed by encountering the good example of an alternative culture.

I have lived on the land and grown my own food for some years and am reasonably good at it. But I am a rank amateur compared to a culture that has lived and learned in the same place for thousands of years. Is it really plausible that my novice example would be more persuasive to those in power than the collective examples of hundreds of different cultures?

Which brings me to my next point.

We fight because most of us live on stolen land. I live in Canada, a place renowned for being rich in "resources" and which depends econom-

ically on resource extraction. But "our" resources were acquired through conquest and colonialism. The land has been occupied and taken by force (as is the case for unceded territory), or deception (as for land taken but treaties not honored), or both. The land doesn't belong to the settler state or the settlers. It belongs to the Algonquin, the Cree, the Ojibwe, the Haudenosaunee, the Haida, the Dene, the Inuit, to many other Indigenous groups, and to the nonhumans who have lived here for thousands of years.

At what point does an occupation based on genocide become legitimate? Imagine that the Nazis had succeeded in conquering the entire planet, that they had driven out or exterminated everyone they considered undesirable. Imagine that they had ushered in a global Third Reich. When would that occupation become legitimate? When would it be acceptable? I would answer: never. The Good Germans might forget the crimes their society was based on. Some of their descendants might, one day, become critical of those crimes. But that would not reverse the atrocities that had taken place. That would not change the fact that their society's foundation, its template, was conquest and occupation.

Colonialism is not an inconvenient afterthought in an otherwise good culture. It is not a misunderstanding that comes from failing to value the arts and culture of Indigenous peoples. It is the Original Sin of civilization. It is the sine qua non of modern, technological society. Industrial capitalism in the Americas—indeed, the entire world—exists only because Indigenous cultures were attacked and dispossessed of their land. Without this, there would be no resource base for industrial society.

How do you reform a system which is based on wholesale genocide and the theft of entire continents from their rightful inhabitants?

You don't.

Colonialism is not part of some quaint bygone age. It is not something that we can all forget about because it happened a long time ago. It continues. You only need to read the news to see that attacks against Indigenous people continue daily in North America and around the world. Expansionist civilizations may have conquered most of the planet, and they have exploited most of the resources, but they are always hungry for more.

The dominant culture is based on overconsumption and the myth of infinite growth. It must expand because it destroys its own land base. Which means it must take over the land bases of others. It has done this for thousands of years, and it will continue to do this until it is stopped. Until *we* say "stop!" and mean it, and are willing to put ourselves and our lives in the way.

We fight because the institutions of "democracy" have failed. Almost everyone recognizes that corporations have more power than people do. For a country to be "democratic" means that it is run by the people, that people are the dominant force in that society. Since corporations are the dominant force in most countries—since laws are made to suit them, and court decisions to benefit them—most countries are not, by definition, democratic. Whether a country has a representative electoral system is secondary; if a government is not accountable to the people, it is not democratic.

If we recognize this then the main debate is only about when and how that corporate power became overwhelming, and what to do about it. It's tempting to believe that the corporate coup is a recent occurrence, and that many of our problems could be solved by "rewinding" a few decades. But is that so?

I'm going to give you three different quotes about corporate power from different years; you tell me which ones are old and which are recent.[24]

Number one: "The time has come to face the fact that the forces of capital and industry have outgrown the forces of government."[25]

Number two: "The result (of American industrial development) is what might have been expected: an overwhelming organization of industry standing side by side with a state that is puny when compared with it."[26]

Number three: "In the last thirty years we have watched the balance of power shift from the hands of the public to those of an industro-financial hierarchy . . . specialists in money making, and actuated by a rather unreflecting instinct of acquisition. . . . To change this control, to re-allocate power, is the problem of the people of the United States."[27]

Okay, it was a trick question. None of these quotations are recent. They were written in 1900, 1904, and 1923 respectively. Well over a century ago it

was widely recognized that corporate power had outstripped the power of the "democratic" state. (For one more, consider the words of Republican organizer Mark Hanna in 1895: "There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money and I can't remember what the second one is.")

We can look back even further. Corporations themselves predate the modern democratic state. They were created by aristocratic European powers as engines of colonialism, to extract resources from the colonies and to transform free and fertile continents into vast mines and plantations. In South Asia in the eighteenth century, the East India Tea Company forced farmers to grow export crops like tea and indigo instead of subsistence crops like rice. The subsequent famines killed well over ten million people. At one time, the Hudson's Bay Company was the de facto ruler of most of Canada. Many of us were raised to see democratic governments as our protectors against corporations—it would be more accurate to say that those governments are the *product* of colonial corporations and of the social and economic relationships they forged.

Yes, corporate rule has worsened in recent decades, but it's been pretty bad for a long time.

Despite the fact that so many people understand we don't live in a genuine democracy, many people insist on pretending that we do. This is an enormous strategic mistake. This pretense may comfort people by making them feel like they have leverage, but in reality the effect is the opposite: deliberate self-delusion deprives us of the tactics we would need to get *actual* democracy and to effect actual change in society.

Not only have the institutions of state democracy failed, but they were never truly ours in the first place. The supposed founder of American democracy, George Washington was one of the richest men in America at the time of independence, a slave-owner unhappy that British taxes were cutting into his profits. Even the original "birthplace of democracy," Athens, was a city where only elite male citizens could vote, and where citizens were far outnumbered by the subjugated slaves who supported them. (Indeed, Athens actually had a *higher* proportion of enslaved people than other "non-democratic" Greek cities.)

Democracy is not something handed down from on high or from mythical ages past, it is something that a people win for themselves.

We fight because it's right. Whenever abuses and atrocities are committed by those in power, defiance is a moral imperative.

Remember the Milgram experiments of the 1960s? Psychologist Stanley Milgram and his colleagues wanted to see if regular people, instructed by a person in authority, would give a fatal electric shock to a stranger. In their initial experiments, almost every participant complied and turned the (simulated) electrical current up to a lethal level.

But in a second experiment, they added another variable: an actor who would sit alongside the participant during the experience. That actor's job was to refuse to proceed with the experiment when the electric shocks became dangerous. When the actor refused, almost all of the participants followed their example and stopped the experiment.

Resistance spreads. The Occupy movement. Idle No More. Black Lives Matter. One person's defiance can inspire another. One person's resistance can allow many other people to stand firm. Victory should always be the goal. But even when there is no clear path to success, resistance is still right. You can't win unless you try. And acts of defiance can the keep the embers of resistance alive even when the fire is at its lowest ebb.

We fight because we are part of a tradition. Wherever there has been oppression and occupation, there has been resistance. From the Visgoths to the abolitionists, from the Mau Mau to the Dakota war parties, from the civil rights sit-ins to the desperate uprisings in Nazi concentration camps, some people always fight back. Any basic rights we possess—the right to vote, to sit at whichever lunch counter we please, to speak dissent openly, the right not to be owned by someone else—have been won by earnest struggle.[28] They exist because people have defied authority and organized against oppression. People have fought, have been tortured, and been imprisoned, have been killed. They have lost decades of their lives in prison. They have lost limbs. They have lost their families. They have lost everything and kept on fighting.

There is a fashionable belief in some circles that fighting back does not work, that social change comes from the goodwill of those in power and from historical inevitability. As I will argue in the chapters to come, this is a gross distortion of historical reality. It is in affront to the memory of

those who have sacrificed to win us the freedoms we have. And it is, above all, a delusion that must be jettisoned before it dooms our social justice struggles and our planet.

Think of all those who have laid down their lives in the struggle against empire and mass exploitation. Think of Ken Saro-Wiwa, murdered by Nigeria and Shell because he stood up for the people of the Niger Delta. Think of Sophie Scholl, hanged by the Nazis for her role in the White Rose Society. In the moment before her execution, she said: "Such a fine, sunny day, and I have to go. But what does my death matter, if through us thousands of people are awakened and stirred to action?"

It seems wrong to speak of courageous people like Scholl and Saro-Wiwa on the same page as those who claim that it is impossible to fight back. Countless people, both famed and anonymous, have given their lives to fight for a better future. We owe them something in return; honesty, at the very least.

We must fight even when we don't think we can win. If we back down, then we teach those in power that they can walk all over us, and we give younger people a terrible example. When we resist, even if we lose that particular battle, we show that we will fight so that next time those in power may pause and reconsider, so that our allies will remember that they are part of a history of resistance.

We must fight because no victory against oppression is ever final. There will always be reactionaries and conservatives who want to roll back the progress we've made—to recover the power and privilege of their past or to "make America great again." We've seen that with Trump and the alt-right. With the police shootings of unarmed people of color that still occur on a weekly or daily basis decades after the civil rights movement.

But, conversely, we must also remember that every victory—even a partial victory—will give us something to build on, will get us closer to a world of true equality and genuine justice.

Resistance is a tradition that extends deep into the past, and it will continue far into the future (presuming we can keep the planet intact enough to support future generations). We take a risk when we act, but we gain something for generations to come.

We fight because most people won't. Most of the globally wealthy are too privileged, too indoctrinated, too shortsighted, or too distracted by the twenty-four-hour media spectacle to fight back. And most of the globally poor are preoccupied with daily survival and other primary emergencies. (That said, the dispossessed are still fighting a hell of a lot harder than the privileged.)

Education alone is never going to be enough. "Education often becomes an impediment to the things we should be doing," argues Indigenous resister Shawn Brant of Tyendinaga. We could spend decades saying the same thing over and over, but if we wait until we convince everyone we will be waiting forever. "Not everyone is going to like us."

The left believes in education and truth. These are wonderful things. But the belief that truth will inevitably win out over falsehood and that history is a one-way roller coaster of human progress is a dangerous mythology. (Look at Donald Trump, or the growing popularity of authoritarian leaders in many countries.) It is tempting to believe that if the global system *truly* gets bad enough then people will finally take action.

Public opinion surveys on global warming offer a refutation of such ideas. In theory, public education about the dangers of greenhouse gases should lead to ever-growing support for solutions. At the very least, more people would acknowledge the *existence* of global warming. But a large percentage of people in the countries with the greatest carbon emissions, such as the United States, are still desperate to ignore climate change.[29] A 2016 study by the Pew Research Center found that 52 percent of adults in the United States do not believe humans are causing climate change. They also found that between 2009 and 2014 the number of Americans who believed climate change is not happening at all actually increased from 11 percent to 25 percent.[30]

While people in general are becoming more aware of climate change over time, those on the right continue to deny—polls found that after Trump's election, Republican voters were more likely to deny that climate change was happening at all.[31]

This increase in denial is partly the result of persistent propaganda campaigns funded by industry groups. And even as public opinion has shifted in some places to ignore climate change, greenhouse emissions

have reached terrible new heights, and almost every year on Earth breaks a new temperature record. But this public apathy is also driven by a lack of serious action—psychological research shows that when people do not make an appropriate response to an emergency, bystanders mentally downgrade the seriousness of the situation.

The idea that action will finally happen when things get bad enough was even present in Germany as Nazi influence grew. Many Communists believed that once Hitler gained power he would finally be revealed for the monster he was—then the working class would rise up and fight. The slogan of the German Communist Party in the early 1930s was "After Hitler comes us." Using this slogan, the Communist Party refused to enter into a coalition with the Social Democrats to stop the rise of Hitler, believing that a backlash against the Nazis would thrust them into power. As German history sadly proved, the "worse is better" theory drastically underestimates the power of political repression to destroy movements.[32]

Indeed, even after the Nuremberg Trials and the exposure of the concentration camps, only 20 percent of Germans said that it would have been acceptable to resist Hitler during World War II.[33] Often resistance must happen *before* a change in mass consciousness and not the other way around.

Some leftists believed that George W. Bush's election would be good news and that if elected his transparent warmongering and corporate favoritism would galvanize public opposition and push the political spectrum to the left. But the opposite happened—the left was cowed into submission after 9/11 and Bush's popularity skyrocketed to ensure his election to a second term. And a second term for Trump surely won't be good.

I wish I could believe that there will be some grand, operatic uprising in the eleventh hour. But neither history nor current events offer support for this. This is not an easy reality to accept, but it is one we must acknowledge and act within.

We fight because we want a real future. Explaining why they fought so hard, civil rights activist Unita Blackwell said: "I guess our courage came out because we didn't have nothing, and we couldn't lose nothing.

But we wanted something for ourselves and for our children. And so we took a chance with our lives."[34]

We've been told that if we buy compact fluorescents and fair-trade coffee, if we vote for the right people and sign the right petitions, if we just stay positive, then not only can we avert ecological disaster but that progress will usher in a happy, green, middle-class future. But this is simply wrong. Fair-trade coffee and the like may be better than the alternative, but it's a tiny change in a system that is overwhelmingly headed in the wrong direction.

Many of us know in our bones that this technotopia is not going to come about. But we don't know what else to do. The alternative is terrifying. The truth is that mainstream environmental and social justice organizations have deeply misled people about what kind of change (and what scale of change) is necessary to create a livable future. They have not done this because they are bad people, but because the really large nonprofits have become corporations like any other. They have to sell a product to make money, and so they sell guilt relief and false hope.

The future they conjure cannot exist. You do not get to a happy green future by destroying the soil, air, and water. The truth is that in the long term we have very little to lose. The people who understand that they have nothing to lose—like Unita Blackwell—are those who fight the hardest. The technotopian future—no matter how well-meaning—is a false diversion that makes us feel like we have something to lose when we don't.

We will only win when we reclaim our own future from the corporations, both in the physical world and in our collective visions.

We fight because we're all in this together. Those in power function by divide and rule, by pitting environmentalists against the working class, Indigenous people against farmers, poor people against immigrant refugees. This strategy has been terribly effective.

But power has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small number of people ruling through a system of patriarchy, racism, ecocide, and violence. Single-issue struggles no longer exist in any meaningful way—no movement can be isolated from others and still have any hope of victory. Only an intersectional approach that combines

an understanding of sexism, racism, classism, and other oppressions will bring success.

If there is any benefit to the consolidation of power, it is that this fact is increasingly obvious: we must either defeat the system of industrial capitalism, with its imperial and colonial methods, or be obliterated by it. Either we bring down the dominant culture and make strides forward in all of our struggles, or we allow this culture to devour what's left of the planet, and all of our struggles will be defeated: we win or lose together.

We fight because holding back won't make us safer. Fighting back is scary. And it can be dangerous. So any excuse that allows us to take the temporarily safer route, to hold back, can be tempting. In any strategy there is a time to hold and a time to push forward. But in the big picture and the long term—when things get really bad—fighting back can make people *more* safe, not less safe.

During World War II there was a secret dissident group in Germany called the Kreisau Circle. About twenty anti-Nazi dissidents from various backgrounds met hundreds of times during the war to discuss what to do. Their major topic of conversation was what to do *after* the war. That is, how to organize some future Germany in a way that would prevent someone like Hitler from seizing power again.

They drew up plans for a decentralized society based on small, distributed, agrarian communities. These autonomous rural villages would be much harder to entrap in centralized authoritarianism. I'm sure that their basic blueprint would be appealing to many back-to-the-landers or Transition Town enthusiasts. The problem was that they spent so much time thinking about how to prevent a *future* war while an *actual current* war—and the Nazi Holocaust—raged on around them. Yes, they were brave and it took courage to engage in any dissident political thought in Nazi Germany. But in hindsight, this was probably not the highest priority.

The Kreisau Circle chose a goal that was relatively safe—remaking a future German society—but also one that they had no leverage over. A few associates of the circle became discontented with the lack of action and carried out a failed assassination attempt against Hitler on July 20, 1944. Those failed assassins were hanged, along with many members of

the Kreisau Circle and other dissident groups. When things get really bad, holding back doesn't help.

I asked Dakota activist and writer Waziyatawin about collaboration and resistance among Indigenous peoples. "I think there are a couple of important lessons I draw from Indigenous resistance struggles here," she told me. "The first is that it mattered little whether people resisted, fled, or acquiesced to colonizer society because in the end we all suffered pretty much the same fate. Thus, if some of our people are engaging in acts of resistance today, we will not save ourselves by betraying that resistance. It is in our best interest to fight. Second, if our ancestors could have seen what would become of our homeland and people, I think they would have fought harder. Today we have every reason to believe that this society will only continue on this pathway of destruction—a notion our ancestors would have had a difficult time imagining given its suicidal nature—so it makes sense for us to fight harder. We risk everything if we do not engage in struggle now. And, unlike our ancestors who were fighting against the rise of American empire, we are fighting amidst its decline."

Though there is little to be gained from holding back, those who fight back often *do* gain something even in the darkest times. (They gain, at the very least, some self-respect.) Those who fought back in the Warsaw Ghetto or the Sobibór concentration camp had a higher survival rate than those who didn't. In the modern day in Canada, suicide rates in some Indigenous communities are as high as eight hundred times the national average, while others have little or no suicide. The difference? A 2003 study showed that Indigenous communities who undertake militant or organized resistance have the lowest suicide rates.[35] Fighting back can save lives in more ways than one.

It is possible to be too nice to those in power. I've written elsewhere about how John Brown, in the course of trying to seize an armory and start a guerrilla war against slavery, paused to allow the defeated defenders of the armory a chance to order out for breakfast and make escorted visits to their family. While he was doing this instead of staying mobile in the way that guerrillas must, an army unit marched over and captured his band. Brown and others were hanged. The consequence of John Brown being too nice (or perhaps, as a friend of mine suggested, trying to demonstrate

compassion and empathy to slave-owners) was exactly the prolonged and bloody civil war that Brown had been trying to head off. Nice actions don't always have nice consequences.

Understand that those in power have a different psychology than those who resist. Sociopaths, from dictators to con men, look at niceness or a desire to compromise and see vulnerability. They see an opportunity for exploitation. They see weakness.

Holding back won't truly make us safer. But fighting back can. Of course, those in power will try to repress those who fight back, often violently. And of course they will attack those who are effective, and even those who are ineffective. That's exactly why we have to stop them.

We fight because it works. We know it works because of the dozens of nations that have successfully expelled dictators or colonizers over the past half-century. We know because women in most of the world can own property, vote, and conduct their own affairs. We know because slavery has been largely wiped out in the Americas.[36] We know because workers in much of the world have the right to form unions and to the eight-hour workday.

Gaetan Heroux of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty told me: "Poor people will never, ever, get the basis of what they need to live unless they fight for it. Because that's how it was won. They won't give it to us by quiet, polite meetings. It was never won like that."

Consider the Suffragists. In the late nineteenth century, women in England lobbied hard for the right to vote. But their polite requests for equal rights were ignored by parliament for decades. It wasn't until a second generation of suffragists came to the fore and escalated their tactics that the government was forced to pay attention. The suffragists fought hard with civil disobedience, property destruction, and arson. Thousands of militant women went to prison, where they faced isolation and abuse. But in the end, their campaign succeeded; women won the vote in England, and soon in many other countries as well.

Resistance groups often go after the economy. In Nigeria, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta has targeted oil infrastructure and on more than one occasion forced a 70 percent decrease in oil output.[37]

From the Boston Tea Party to the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the African National Congress, resistance struggles have gone after the economies of the ruling class because it is so incredibly effective.

It's time for us to move from dissidence to resistance. As the cofounder of the suffragist Women's Social and Political Union, Christabel Pankhurst, wrote: "We know that relying solely on argument we wandered for forty years politically in the wilderness. We know that arguments are not enough . . . and that political force is necessary."

Or as the civil rights song went: "The only thing we did was wrong / staying in the wilderness too long. . . . I know the one thing we did right / was the day we started to fight."

In this book I will show how resistance movements form and organize in practical terms. How and why people join movements and how to encourage that process (chapter 4). How groups form and organize themselves to be as effective and safe as possible whether they are organizing aboveground or underground (chapter 5). The rules and practices they use to stay secure, to protect themselves, and to limit infiltration and repression by prosecution (chapter 6).

I will illustrate how people and groups communicate and stay connected so that they can spread their message, coordinate with allies, and navigate their relationship with the mass media (chapter 7). How organizations gather the intelligence and information they need to make smart decisions and understand their adversary's weak points (chapter 8). And how resistance movements hamper their opponent's attempts to gather that information about them, and how they cope with attacks on their movement through secret disruption or overt repression (chapter 9).

I will discuss how they raise money, how they support them-selves, and how they organize the fundamental logistics that underpin any long-term struggle (chapter 10).

The closing chapters of the book will discuss how those movements take effective action through their tactics (chapter 11) and the principles that guide successful strategy and allow movements to integrate these different capacities (chapter 12).

But before we can get to those practicalities, we must have a better

understanding of what makes a movement *work*.[38] We must understand what it means to fight to win, and why we have been held back. And we must understand how to deploy the full range of appropriate tactics we have available.

It's time to stop wandering in the political wilderness. This book is about fighting—and winning.