The Day After
November 4, 2026

Our North Star

Toward Peace and Freedom

NOTE: *When people come together in pursuit of freedom, they often articulate a program* **to** *and* **for** *a public. We're inspired by examples like the Combahee River Collective Statement; the Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Program; and the Zapatista Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (work, land, and housing; independence and liberty; food, health care, and education; democracy, justice, and peace). Here is a draft—no, a rickety draft of a draft—for discussion, debate, dialogue, additions, adjustments, corrections, revisions, and improvements.*

We want peace. We want freedom. We want real democracy and self-determination for all peoples, and the power to control our own communities.

We are looking uneasily at the world we've inherited, and we're searching together for solutions to the multiple challenges facing us. A future of peace and freedom is beckoning from the near horizon, inviting us to come together to create a world of justice and joy, balance and well-being for all—that future is at hand, but it's not here yet.

We live in a country and a world brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin—corruption dominates the ballot box, the legislatures, and the political class, and the fruits of the labor of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes,

unprecedented in history, while the ruling oligarchs despise and endanger liberty everywhere. The imperial center extracts tribute, labor, and resources from around the globe, making the US essentially a parasitic state. The US military spreads its threatening wings across the globe, creating a constant state of war to keep subject peoples in line. And yet, paradoxically, unprecedented military power does not make any of us safe. A small group of men seem determined to break the heart of the world.

We have a lot of work to do to reimagine and rebuild everything before us. Let's get busy—arm-in-arm—in the most urgent projects of repair.

We've been thrust into a set of overlapping crises not of our choosing—crises that threaten to overwhelm us and destroy the possibility of a humane, or even a human, future. We're determined to resist, to survive the gathering storms as we work to transform chaos into community. We come together to change society—from militarism and permanent war to a nation at peace; from economic uncertainty for the many and obscene amounts of wealth hoarded by the 1% to a country and community where everyone contributes to the common good; from an autocracy of billionaires determining who our political leaders will be to egalitarian participatory democracy; from a fractured country characterized by hierarchies of color, caste, and class to an inclusive and caring society; from patriarchy to true equality; from catastrophic climate collapse to a world in balance; and from the terrifying loneliness and precariousness of hyper-individualism to a shared understanding that we are all in this together. We will never be as prosperous or as free as we could be until all people are living in fellowship, enjoying equal

rights and opportunities. Let's search together for practical pathways toward creating that kind of Beloved Community.

The solution to any one of the looming calamities we're facing depends on addressing all of them because each is intricately entangled with the others. War-making is linked to a warming world; the division of society into disposable people and worthwhile people is connected to a legacy of white supremacy; our anemic democratic institutions are embedded in a culture that ignores or punishes social solutions while it rewards individual greed and selfishness. We must change.

We ground our work toward a world of peace and freedom for all in fundamental moral principles that are our guides and pilots. And we begin with a belief that anchors all major faith traditions: every human being is of infinite and incalculable value. We want to contribute now to creating a world in which human beings, rather than swindling and murdering one another, acknowledge and love one another as equals.

There's a distinction to note here between fundamental moral principles and personal virtues. Personal virtues—be honest, do your work, show up on time—are a good thing no doubt, but we would be hard-pressed to say that a slave owner who paid the bills, for example, was an ethical person. An ethical person there and then had to wake up to the larger social context and try to live in active opposition to the rotten system itself. Most of us most of the time follow the prevailing conventions of our time and place—most Spartans, for example, acted like Spartans; most 15th Century Castilians, acted like 15th Century Castilians; and most Americans, even those in quite different economic and social circumstances, act most often like Americans. That's

conventional behavior, and conventional is not necessarily ethical.

To be an ethical actor and a person of moral character in an unjust society requires something more: to work in common to change that society, to rewrite its rules and its narratives, to come together and take risks on behalf of something better. It's obvious now (even if it was obscure to some folks then) that the good people and the moral actors in the days of American slavery were the runaways who exercised their agency in courageous and surprising acts of self-liberation, and the abolitionists who joined the cause. They went beyond the little virtues and became ethical actors. When the system of slavery was finally abolished, a new norm was established, and everyone, acting conventionally, was freed to discover the better angels of themselves.

We can struggle for this or that policy change now—and we should—but policy shifts alone are inadequate to the task of building a society that works for everyone. In order for that to become authentic and real we need to change ourselves—we need a revolution in values. True and lasting freedom will only come with the full recognition that we're all better off when we're all better off—"we are each other's harvest: we are each other's business: we are each other's magnitude and bond." We must love one another, or die.

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A Ten Point Program

Unifying, Achievable, and Transformative Goals

ONE) We want **peace**.

We want to live in peace, to worship in peace, to create in peace, to travel and go to work or school in peace. In order to generate and produce a peace culture, we must invest time and energy and resources toward building relationships of empathy, fellow feeling, mutual understanding, and authentic dialogue—both close at hand, across the country, and around the world. It's a lie that a trillion dollar annual war budget makes us secure; it's untrue that hundreds of military bases scattered around the globe staffed by troops juiced up on testosterone equals protection; it's a myth that aggressive military actions (saber-rattling threats, bullying, invasions, and occupations) somehow support the common good; and it's false to say that constant surveillance, militarized police forces, or mass incarceration make us safe. It's just the opposite: all of those things isolate us from one another and render us more vulnerable. Sitting on the throne of empire and commanding its violent legions is in truth a dangerous and precarious place to be.

The world is on fire—war and violence in every direction—and yet the people want peace. The rich and powerful start the

forever wars, and working people fight those wars and make the sacrifices. We're only dimly aware of what a general peace would look or feel like—even as we wish it were so—because the world has had no experience of a world without war. The people want peace, and yet today, and everyday, thousands of us will be starving or bleeding to death or blowing one another to pieces; homeless children will be scrabbling for food among the wreckage. Peace is a worthy objective, and yet to say what a peaceful world would look like is a different matter—we have never seen such a thing. But that should not deter us from imagining and demanding a world at peace, and then working toward making it so.

Torture, rendition, imprisonment without trial, economic plunder of natural resources, seizure of strategic waterways, domination of the air and the seas, invasions and occupations, extra judicial killings, assassinations, drone strikes, and the bombing of civilians—all of these atrocities and more are crimes regardless of which country, which army, or which individual commits them. US secretary of state Madeleine Albright famously asserted that the United States is the one and only "indispensable nation." "If we have to use force, it is because we are America," she said. "We are the indispensable nation." That is pure bunk and a clear recipe for disaster.

War is and has always been the scourge of humanity—the wholesale deaths and massive destruction is both horrifying and overwhelming. And here we must face a hard truth: our country is number one in military spending worldwide with over a third of the world's total military budget, and military spending continues to skyrocket. The US is also the world's number one arms dealer—42% of all global arms exports, followed by

France at 9.8%—disseminating massive amounts of everything from missiles and warplanes to hand guns.

Peace is more than the absence of war; peace is the presence of justice. We must create a movement for justice as we build a movement for peace. The US should use its phenomenal wealth to become a nation among nations and a people among peoples—there's nothing to gain or cherish by attempting to be the *uber*-nation nor some imagined superior people.

~~Palestine is the moral core of our struggle for peace today. The US must stop weapons sales and aid to Israel immediately, stop enabling Israel's genocide and systemic ethnic cleansing, and stop vetoing UN resolutions that would provide a modicum of accountability for Israel's massive human rights violations.

~~Close all overseas military bases, and root US international policy in the rule of law.

~~Close the Department of War and Create a Department of Peace, using our enormous resources to develop policies rooted in global understanding, authentic internationalism, dialogue, and solidarity, starting with an agreement to ban nuclear testing and proliferation.

~~Stop the militarization of domestic police forces, abolish ICE, and cut the Pentagon budget by 20% immediately, and 10% every year after that for the next 5 years.

~~Disentangle the US from the war-sopped economy, starting with cancelling contracts with Lockheed Martin ($72 billion annually), Northrop Grumman ($37 billion) , and General

Dynamics ($39 billion), as well as the techno-oligarchs of Silicon Valley like Peter Thiel (Palantir), Elon Musk (Space-X), and Palmer Luckey (Anduril).

TWO) We want **equality**.

Every human being matters, and we recognize that each of us is both the one-and-only—entirely unique, inviolate, and like no other—and at the same time only one part of our vast, shared human community—exactly like everyone else in important ways. We are each sacred, unrepeatable, and immeasurably precious, and yet we each share with all other human beings a human culture and a human experience—we were born, we want to love and to be loved, we dream, we suffer, we experience both joy and pain, and we will die. We are each both the one-of-one and one of the many—let's embrace and live within that contradiction.

Each of us is the star in our own story; each is the author, director, and artist of our own life. We can choose to see everyone else as a bit player—unimportant and disposable—which is a terrible mistake, or we can recognize and respect the fact that each person is the lead character in their own life as well.

One way to think about the society we might build is to participate in a simple thought experiment: imagine yourself about to be born, and you're unaware of who you will be, that is, you're behind a "veil of ignorance"—you're about to be thrust into the world, and none of the details of the life you're about to

embark upon is available to you. Your gender, race, abilities, tastes, ethnicity, wealth, social position, status, and more, are entirely unknown. Perhaps you're blind or developmentally delayed; perhaps you're of African or Asian or European or Indigenous descent; perhaps you're born into extreme poverty. Of course that unknowing is the actual condition of every baby, but now, with all those obscured facts in mind, ask yourself, how should society be organized in order to allow you to create and lead a full, meaningful, and dignified life? What would be fair to you as a worthwhile human being, and what would be fair to everyone else as well? What would be justice and fair-mindedness to anyone caught on the wrong side of a broken system?

Each of us is a work in progress—questioning, listening, falling down, rising once more, learning, and continuously experimenting with and interrogating the world—and a force in motion, born equal in dignity and rights, and deserving recognition, respect, and a dedicated place in our shared community. We have distinct capacities and interests and needs, of course, and still we are all members of a larger communal space, and we have a right to live, to belong, to grow and learn and flourish. The ancient Roman playwright, Terence (Publius Terentius Afer), wrote, "I am human, and nothing human is alien to me." He is human—the one-of-one—and nothing human is alien to him—he is one person among the wildly diverse, complex, and fiery human community.

We should all try to live with that in mind: to love our own life, and to love others as well; to be good to ourselves as well as good neighbors to everyone we meet—to bandage the wounded, to help those who are hurting, to stand with the outcast. It is

literally true that the “self-supporting” man or woman has become as extinct as the man or woman of the Stone Age. We are interdependent, and without the activities of thousands upon thousands of others, any one of us would perish—naked, starved, and alone.

I am the one-and-only, and I am one-of-the-many.

~~Acknowledge a woman’s (and every human being’s) right to bodily integrity.

~~Defend and extend the Dream Act.

~~Raise the minimum wage, provide jobs or guaranteed incomes now, and implement a fair and progressive wealth tax.

~~Organize gatherings, large and small, in every city, town, and community, and ask participants to enter a conversation around a critical question: What is your pursuit of happiness?

THREE) We want **egalitarian democracy, and self-determination** for all peoples.

Democracy is more than voting, more than any formal mechanism that allows (and limits) participation. Building a culture of democracy requires us to develop a sense of fairness worked out face to face with others—we become sources of both freedom and mutual aid for one another as we create norms of equality, mutual respect, tolerance for mistakes, interdependence, and reciprocity. We find all kinds of

appropriate ways to share resources and care about and for one another.

In a robust democracy we try to account for and correct all chance/accidental disadvantages. An authentically democratic society invites people to discover or invent new ways to live, and new passages through which to make collective decisions. With genuine power in their hands, people can learn to make smart and socially useful decisions, and also to assume real responsibility for carrying out their collectively developed resolutions. The challenge to ourselves and others, especially people who've been traditionally ignored or excluded, is to ensure that involvement will have meaning and be effective, and that their ideas will be respected. The greater hazard is not too much, but too little participation.

Participatory democracy is always close to the ground, that is, people vote for folks they actually know—administrators and leaders in their work places and communities—who then vote for the next level of administration and leadership, and the next, and the next. Democracy is engaged locally and trickles up with people charged with making the decisions that affect their lives—big and small decisions alike.

What kinds of people do we want to become? Imagine advancing beyond the predatory phase in human affairs, and begin to envision a place of more, not less, economic democracy and justice, more respect for civil liberties and more tolerance for each other's private lives, more public culture and more joyous shared space, more dialogue and camaraderie and solidarity. More freedom and more democracy.

~~One-person/one-vote without restrictions. End gerrymandering.

~~Reform and remake the Supreme Court by expanding it to 17 members and establishing staggered term-limits of 6 years.

~~Drastically restrict private money in electoral politics. Legislate an end to super-pacs, the Citizen's United decision, and corporate wealth determining the outcomes of elections.

~~Incentivize and support efforts to create and support worker-owned enterprises, cooperatives, collectives, and unions through negotiation where possible and occupations, seizures, and takeovers where necessary.

~~Create a system of voluntary and universal community service at eighteen, everyone choosing to devote a year of service in one of ten areas determined of, by, and for the people. Designated areas of service might include food production and distribution, child and elder care, tutoring, rehabilitating housing, environmental justice, community health, infrastructure development, establishing and maintaining neighborhood gardens and parks and murals. We'd all be better if we created such a system, and we'd likely develop more powerful investments and opinions and political priorities about who we are and what we want to become.

FOUR) We want **popular budgeting**—public, transparent, participatory, and value-driven—at every level of government.

Taxpayer money, our public money, should be spent in accordance with our public priorities and our public decision-making. And those priorities should be grounded in our deepest moral principles.

Right-wing politicians and talking heads refer endlessly to tax-and-spend-liberals, weak-willed whiners who lack gumption, oppose tax cuts for the so-called“ job creators,” support the “Nanny State,” and spend most of their time sniveling about being entitled to things like a job and a place to live, food, education, and health care, all the while begging for more government handouts for the lazy and the shiftless. The word “tax” itself is so toxic among US politicians that actual liberals can barely squeak the word out, preferring a range of euphemisms—revenues, co-pays, deductibles—as they too call for all manner of tax cuts. Ask a conservative US senator to vote for universal health care and you’ll be accused of being a tax-and-spend-liberal and maybe a communist agitator; ask the same senator to cut taxes substantially by closing all US military facilities abroad and ending military aid to Israel, and you’ll be called a communist again.

Often people refer to government provisions they favor (veteran’s benefits—which are nonetheless stingily meted out—or farm subsidies—which mainly benefit Big Agriculture) as necessary and fair, while programs they oppose (Medicaid or Aid to Dependent Children) are disparaged as “welfare” for the lazy “takers.” The arguments for and against become a tangle of rationalizations and hypocrisies: one type of aid is sensible while another type is wasteful or encourages slothfulness.

This is all fraudulent posturing, because everyone knows that the business of government—liberal or conservative, open or authoritarian, feudal, theocratic, royal, capitalist, fascist, autocratic, socialist, or whatever—always includes the business of taxing and spending. If they're honest, liberals and conservatives, reactionaries and radicals alike, as well as people bridging the widest possible political reaches, will agree that some folks ought to be taxed at certain set rates in order to mutually support the things we decide are our common needs. The only questions worth debating, then, are who should be taxed and how much? Who decides? What constitutes the general welfare and what should the collective pool of public funds be spent on? What would be fair and just? Or, how can we create a society in which each of us contributes what we can to the common good, and each of us receives what we need in order to live a life of dignity?

Inequality has been rising exponentially since 1980, driven by regressive tax policies that tilt in favor of the wealthiest who continue to pull away, not just from the middle class, but also from the "merely wealthy." The top 1% of Americans hold almost 1/3 of the country's wealth, and their share increased by $8.5 trillion just between the first and second quarters of 2026 while the middle's share is shrinking. Since President Ronald Reagan's tax cuts in the 1980s, the US tax code has become less and less fair through policy changes supported by both mainstream political parties. The common argument for tax cuts is that they stimulate growth—there's no evidence that that's true.

There's nothing wrong or hateful about advocating a policy of taxing the rich—taxing the poor makes no sense since they don't

have the resources we need for the common good. Taxing the rich recognizes the reality that vast wealth is the product of the labor of millions, as well as the principle that no one should be so rich that they can own others nor so poor that they must sell themselves to survive.

~~Tax the rich.

~~Spend generously on social investments like public education, public health, public housing, public transportation, and guarantees of income—all of which create safer and more flourishing communities—and cut spending on government surveillance, the military and militarized police forces, mass incarceration and the caging of human beings.

~~No new prisons.

FIVE) We want **fully resourced schools available to all**, schools that embrace and teach freedom.

In every totalitarian society schools are built for obedience and conformity, and no matter what else they teach, compliance is at the top of the agenda—a theocracy teaches rigid dogma and absolute deference to religious authority; a kingdom teaches fealty to the royals; a racialized society teaches hierarchy and the importance of everyone accepting the power and stability of the color line.

In a free and truly democratic society schools embody a spirit of cooperation, inclusion, and full participation—schools honor diversity while building unity. This means, for example, that enforced racial segregation, class separation, and disparate funding are wrong. There's no justification in a free and fair country for the existence of one school for wealthy white kids funded to the tune of $50,000 or more per student per year, and another school for poor immigrant or Indigenous kids, or the descendants of formerly enslaved people with access to only $5,000. That offends the basic ethic that each person is equal in value and regard, and reflects instead the reactionary idea that some of us are disposable while others are valuable. It also expresses a simple and crude message we send to children: Choose the Right Parents! If you choose parents with money, access, social connections, and privilege, your choices and your chances will expand; if not, sorry, you're on your own. This is cruel and absurd.

But it conforms to the harsh reality that maintains a caste-based system whose core principle, according to Jay Gillen, is that, "Every family will secure the best education for their children that their wealth and status can afford." In this system education is reduced to a product to be sold in the market place.

Education as a fundamental human right challenges this reality, and insists that a good education should be available and accessible to every child, regardless of circumstance. When families are forced to play a real-life version of Hunger Games and students must compete for admission to an excellent school because of a scarcity of seats, that violates the right to an education.

The purpose of education in a free society is always human enlightenment and human liberation, and the driving principle is the unity of humanity—the recognition of differences as well as a consciousness of our interdependence. People are different—our wild diversity, distinct capacities, and unique needs are a fact—and we are, at the same time, entirely connected. We embrace the conviction that every human being is entitled to decent standards concerning freedom and justice and education, and that any violations, deliberate or inadvertent, must be fought against, testified to, and resisted.

In a free world we recognize our students as unruly sparks of meaning-making energy on exciting voyages of discovery and surprise. We want them to be able to think for themselves, to make judgments based on evidence and argument, to develop minds of their own. And we want them to be free to ask fundamental questions—who in the world am I? How did I get here and where am I going? What's my story? What in the world are my choices? How in the world shall I proceed?—and to pursue the answers to wherever they might lead. Whatever else is on offer, in the free world we teach initiative, courage, imagination, creativity, and more. These qualities must be modeled and nourished, encouraged, practiced, and defended.

Young people, teachers, and whole communities rallied around the Algebra Project in Baltimore and pioneered a program that embodied these values. They built a system in which teenagers could look forward to paid knowledge-based jobs when they got to high school—coaching, directing plays or mural-making, teaching drawing or math, leading reading groups, teaching poetry, organizing chemistry experiments, teaching journalism and media, choreographing dance, building a debate club,

convening school-wide meetings focused on math or reading or athletics, or planning advocacy campaigns on issues that the young people themselves decided were important. This meant that young people were paid to do formally what they already knew how to do informally—sharing knowledge with peers—but now in a format and venue where it was recognized and rewarded. The important lessons learned and competencies gained from this practice included initiative, agency, responsibility, self-respect and respect for others, collaboration, and life-long learning.

We want free students to develop the capacity to name the world for themselves, to identify the obstacles to their full humanity, and the courage to act upon whatever the known demands. Education for freedom is always about opening doors and opening minds as students forge their pathways into a wider, shared world of free thinking.

~~Education is a human right and everyone must have access to a free high-quality education, K-16, from early childhood through technical school or college. Whatever the most privileged and thoughtful parents have access to for their children must become the baseline for what we demand for all children—anything less undermines and ultimately destroys democracy.

~~Schools are laboratories for learning, and must be, therefore, spaces where students can ask questions, read and inquire freely, and pursue their interests and investigations to the furthest limits. Students need no one's permission to interrogate the world.

~~Ban police forces and the military from our schools.

SIX) We want **universal single-payer health insurance** for all.

Health care is a human right. Everyone wants good health, and because everyone is vulnerable to the vagaries and unpredictabilities of life, and all of us benefit from the security that comes from being insulated from the shock of serious injury or illness, we want a health care system that delivers. Even if many of us will never suffer significant affliction, all of us gain when people get the health care they need at a price we can afford. It's not complicated: remove all profit and market incentives from the system, break the health insurance racket, equalize the financial risk between the healthy and the sick, the well and the wounded, and create a simple social contract built on shared costs and guaranteed benefits.

Medicare—fiercely opposed by conservatives and political reactionaries when it was proposed over half a century ago—is imperfect and flawed, but a popular and sensible single-payer plan for the elderly and the disabled. It's similar in conception to national health care plans throughout the rest of the industrialized world. Compared to the tangled swamp of corporate medicine we slog through on our way to age sixty-five, it's no wonder that people overwhelmingly support it. Private medical corporations squander a huge percentage of their resources on vast bureaucracies whose purpose is to examine every expenditure and, whenever possible, to deny coverage—the rest of the resources go to pay obscene benefits to

the stockholders and to the executives whose specialty is figuring out how to charge more and deliver less.

But if Medicare is good for sixty-five-year-olds, why not sixty-year-olds? And if sixty, why not fifty? Down we go. It turns out that strong majorities favor just such a direction—some form of public option or single-payer—but the corporate elites and their enablers in both major political parties wage a long and endless war on people's right to comprehensive health care. Some in the pay of the rackets push to privatize Medicare, others support increasing premiums and co-pays, chipping away at services, and shifting costs to working people. But none of them questions the logic of the market or corporate medicine, and all of them allow the insurance and pharmaceutical industries to author or veto all health-related legislation. Big Pharma is in the business of business; health and wellness is the last thing on its agenda.

Six times in the last several decades serious attempts have been made to develop and legislate a single-payer, universal health care system, and each attempt failed. Each defeat relied on the powerful health predators and profiteers coupling single-payer with a loss of freedom—dictatorial, undemocratic, top-heavy, bureaucratic, authoritarian, rigid—and then bribing enough politicians to defeat single-payer legislation.

The market in health care has created a deeply unequal system that stretches from the shameful state of mental health care to the tawdry patchwork of nursing home care, from disdain for the poor and the elderly to the war on women. The market—like all markets—creates winners and losers, and not surprisingly the biggest winners are the rich, and the biggest losers are working

people, the poor, and those traditionally oppressed and exploited. Health disparities are everywhere, and universally appalling: 25 percent of Black mothers, for example, get no prenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy (and 6 percent get no care for the entire nine months) compared to 11 percent (and 2 percent) of white mothers; mortality rates during the first year of life are fourteen per one thousand for Black children and six per one thousand for white children.

Inequities between men and women are monstrous in the capitalist health system. Women's judgments about reproduction and birth are strictly policed by both the state and a mobilized mob—since 2011 more than 280 laws have been enacted in 31 states restricting women's access to reproductive health. These laws make access more costly, more difficult (with mandatory wait times and multiple visits), and more humiliating.

Market-driven health care is also pauperizing us: 50 percent of personal bankruptcy filings in the US are directly related to medical costs and bills. Industries from auto to airlines, as well as public entities from states to municipalities, cannot meet financial or contractual obligations to employees because of the staggering costs of corporate health care. Compare Canadian and US auto industries, for example, and one thing stands out: health care as a contractual benefit (the US) as opposed to a public trust (Canada) is extraordinarily stupid.

The market is remarkably wasteful: an average nurse spends 33 percent of their time on documentation for insurers; the US spends twice as much as Canada and Europe on administrative costs; 3 percent of Medicare costs go toward administration compared to 40 percent of individual insurance costs.

The US is the only industrialized country in the world in which it's legal to advertise prescription drugs to the public which serves no public health interest whatsoever, but does indeed serve corporate wealth. Half of all Americans are taking prescription drugs at any given moment, and one in ten is taking more than five; millions of youngsters are taking prescription drugs for ADHD, including fourteen thousand children ages two or three. We are all potential customers—babies are the future clients the dope peddlers hope to hook.

Big Pharma—which is a profit-generating machine that doesn't give a damn about anyone's health—has always relied on basic research performed with public funds at the National Institute of Health. Taxpayers foot the bill for the research that later allows Big Pharma to rip us off. This must end.

The results of the corrupt and expensive corporate health care system are not encouraging: the rank of the US among eleven wealthy countries in health system performance is 11th; the rank of US among the countries of the world in annual per capita health care spending is 3rd; the rank of US out of 224 countries in average life expectancy is 43rd.

It's past time to end the predatory health insurance industry and recognize heath care as a basic human right.

~~Create a universal single-payer health insurance system.

~~Ban all TV advertising for prescription drugs as well as for ultra-processed foods.

~~Correct for all inequities based on race, background, or wealth to basic health care.

~~Defend women's access to reproductive health care.

SEVEN) We want **housing justice and decent housing** for all.

Every night more than 750,000 people in the richest country in the world sleep on the street. Many more are sleeping in their cars, couch-surfing, or experiencing housing insecurity. Many people are a paycheck away from the streets—an unforeseen circumstance like a layoff or an accident, a lapse in health care coverage, a vet returning home without a job or a support system. Unhoused people are like any and all of us—ordinary working folks who, faced with a bad break, found themselves on the street. This is intolerable—the shame of the nation—and it awakens us to act.

Housing is a human right, and everyone deserves a place to call home. Making housing a commodity, subject to invasion by corporate raiders, inevitably throws people onto the streets. While eighty-nine countries make explicit reference to housing rights in their constitutions, that list does not include the US. There is not a single county in the US where a full-time minimum wage worker can afford a modest two-bedroom apartment. Housing insecurity—being vulnerable to becoming unhoused with little warning—is the norm for millions of Americans.

The budget for the federal department of Housing and Urban Development is $73 billion annually, while we spend trillions on the military, including over $1 billion a day for the war-of-choice in Iran, and $80 billion for prisons. In 2021, the typical white household had over 9 times as much wealth as the typical Black household—the disparity of home ownership between Black and white is a major reasons for this inequity.

Zoning ordinances were historically designed to exclude and wall off—we need inclusive zoning, including generous government-funded and aesthetically pleasing high-density housing.

Public housing began in the US as a means of providing homes for millions of people impacted by the Great Depression. The National Housing Act of 1937 helped to create housing authorities in every state for working class folks devastated by the Depression. At one point the US government's mandate was to provide "a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family"—the exact words in the National Housing Act of 1949. This was a time—in the not-so-distant past—when most people believed in the responsibility of government to care for its people. The desire to live in a fair and decent society included demands for housing and education, safety and healthcare.

Eventually the federal government began funding Indigenous housing programs that prioritized tribal self-governance. And public housing is not just about housing *per se*, but also about how decent housing helps to create public health systems, public education, public safety, and public welfare—the things that we need for a flourishing commonwealth.

The real cost to our society and ourselves are moral costs—something that cannot be quantified. We dehumanize ourselves when we look the other way and allow violence to happen to others, and we debase ourselves when human rights are ignored or invalidated. We must ask ourselves: what do we owe to a proximate stranger in distress? How shall we treat our neighbors? What would the Good Samaritan do?

~~Recognize adequate housing as a human right.

~~Implement a fair and graduated tax on all non-primary residences.

~~Repair the harm created by decades of redlining by in investing in targeted communities in ways that minimize displacement.

EIGHT) We want a **healthy and livable world** now and for future generations.

With the unfolding climate crisis, the global stakes are existential: nothing short of the future of human civilization. We're all in this together—human and other living beings alike—here in our wondrous home, a vast but now threatened global ecosystem, Mother Earth. Ecosystems are being destroyed. From coral reefs to glacial fields, seas are rising. Island and coastal homes, villages and cities are being destroyed. Why is this happening? Because billion dollar

industries and compliant governments would rather reap near-term profits than protect the lives of future generations.

We industrialized human beings must use our rational minds and our ethical hearts to mobilize against our common enemies: oil companies, extractive industries, toxic purveyors, and the governments that subsidize and protect them. We need to commit to minimizing harm, refuse to profit from it, and imagine new ways to generate healthy systems toward a livable future. We can begin by honoring the indigenous practices and traditions that have been upended by ravenous capitalism.

We face grave dangers that call for urgent responses, and these are not "natural dangers"—they result from capitalism's unrestrained and rapacious depletion of the natural world and the pumping of carbon dioxide into the earth's atmosphere —especially for the last 40 years and specifically by the US and, at record profits, by the world's fossil fuel giants.

We need to face the dangers before us with courage and wisdom, seeking genuine alternatives and putting the scientific reality of catastrophic climate change into all of our change efforts. We must build a coherent and unifying narrative about the real solutions to the climate catastrophe. In doing so, we create the potential for a global movement for change—environmental and political—because everyone is impacted. At the same time, we must realize that those most impacted, those whose lives are in greatest danger, are generally those least responsible for the harm.

For the past half decade, solar energy has become the most widely developed and least expensive global energy resource—and none of it passes through the Strait of Hormuz.

We must build renewable resources to power our communities. We need an enlightened economic system capable of restraining corporate power and capitalist avarice, overturning colonialist energy strategies, strengthening participatory democracy, redistributing earth's resources. We must discover new ways to unleash clean energy to do the real and necessary work of the world uncoupled from racism and wage slavery.

Climate collapse is not an issue like every other; in fact, it's not an issue at all. It is an all-encompassing reality. Climate change, and the toxic emissions of air pollutants poisoning local communities from Cancer Alley in Louisiana to school children in Harlem, from the South Pacific Islands to Bangladesh, are not natural disasters: they are the inevitable products of the capitalist market system. They claim thousands of lives annually, and they are disasters caused by governments, corporations, and economic systems.

These disasters challenge our relationship to the natural world—no part of the earth is untouched. The natural world we've always turned to for life, for natural healing, for great beauty and spirituality, is no longer untouched. The end of nature, as Bill McKibben writes, is revealing that the inherent and intrinsic value of nature cannot be monetized or marketed without irreparable harm.

But at the same time the climate crisis has created an opportunity for global solidarity and global solutions best led by those most at risk. It forces us to reimagine how we live, what we value, and how we organize our labor; it's asking us to adopt and grow sustainable alternatives; it is urging us to pay close attention and demanding that we act forcefully and collectively.

Corporate power, the 1% and their enablers in the media and political establishment, systematically use crises, both real (like floods or fires) and invented (like Detroit going bankrupt), to enact cruel ideological agendas designed to enrich themselves at the expense of those who were hurt by the problems in the first place. “Disaster Capitalism” seizes every tragedy, misfortune, or calamity and turns it into another profit-making opportunity. The real causes of crises are never examined by the powerful; authentic or alternative solutions are never seriously pursued as the elites double down on the very policies and politics that created the crisis in the first place. In times like these we remind ourselves that our problem is not that we are vulnerable or poor—our problem is that we are being robbed.

Individual solutions or painting capitalism green won’t help. Taking a page from the tobacco industry’s playbook, the concept of the individual carbon footprint was promoted by the fossil fuel company BP in 2004. BP encouraged people to estimate how their consumption habits hurt the environment using their carbon footprint calculator. The company then spent $300 million promoting the concept. The American Petroleum Institute funded curricula touting their product and questioning climate science. While keeping our eyes fixed on our individual behavior rather than systemic causes, the fossil majors sought to postpone the unavoidable perception that their products were, in fact, the problem. Many advocates and governments adopted false solutions, like cap-and-trade programs or sucking carbon out of the atmosphere and then burying it in the Earth.

Our eyes have also been diverted from the greatest user of fossil fuel in the world—the US military—and the reckless carbon emissions and toxins spread by US aerial bombardments of

Gaza since 2024, the made-in-America accompaniment to the Israeli genocide.

Few nations today are on the path to carbon-freedom. Most existing political and social systems run hungrily and recklessly on retrograde notions of economic growth, damming rivers, extracting all the coal and gas they can grab, burning filthy fuels, expanding and accumulating whatever they can and as far as they can reach.

We can reimagine and vitalize the public square, spaces and communities where people participate fully in planning the kind of circular economies and the urgent work of creating environmentally just solutions to the crisis. We must electrify our homes, our cooking, our transportation and run them all on abundant and affordable renewable energy. We must turn back the IPOs and privatization of energy and the tech world; we must ensure that banks, corporations, and data centers are heavily taxed and regulated, and get popular public control over public service industries.

We can look to gatherings on climate change in Santa Marta, Colombia where nations backing a fossil fuel treaty began negotiations independent of the UN process kidnapped by petro-states and the oil industry, with environmental justice leadership.

~~Transition from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy, and achieve freedom from carbon by 2040.

---Advance public ownership of the energy industry, removing the profit motive from this essential enterprise.

~~Ban construction of fossil fuel infrastructure from pipelines to shipping terminals.

~~End impunity for fossil fuel companies and require reparations for loss and damage along with penalties for decades of defrauding their customers, their shareholders, their governments, and the public.

~~Rejoin the international community and negotiate climate and other treaties in good faith in order to meet the most urgent needs of the Global South.

NINE) We want **repair and reparations** for past harm.

Reparations simply means compensation for an injury or an abuse. The goal is to acknowledge and repair some harm. If someone runs through a red light and causes a car accident, we expect repair and restoration—not punishment, but reparations.

Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address—the one available in most history textbooks—was delivered two years after the Emancipation Proclamation: "[The war will] continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword." This was the angry cry of abolition and reparations, the real stakes in the conflict, which was defined by the heroism and sacrifice of the striking and self-liberating enslaved people, and the soldiers fighting on their side. And these words are important to remember today as we continue to

raise the specter of abolition and the demand for reparations for decades of harm, including unrequited toil.

The US—its wealth and power, its culture and customs, its laws and government—was built on an elaborate architecture of white supremacy that includes the system of slavery and the practice of conquest, war, and genocide (in North America to start, but eventually stretching its deadly talons to Latin America, Asia, and Africa), the defeat of Reconstruction, the regime of lynching, Jim Crow, and more. Everyday bigotry and racist ideas bloom in the nourishing shade of those structures of inequality based on color. For many well-intentioned liberals, the path to repairing past harms is to be found exclusively in individuals, one by one, "unlearning racism" or embracing "diversity, equity, and inclusion." The definition of the problem leads to a specific theory of action: if the problem is merely a bad idea inside some people's heads, the solution is in psychology and persuasion. But if instead the problem is structural, then action must involve dismantling those structures.

"Unlearning racism" is a doomed project because a collective catastrophe—vast structural inequities never repaired, centuries of exploitation and oppression and generational trauma caused by our laws and backed by armed agents of the state—demands a collective response. The harm was instituted by the government and embraced by the dominant society; any authentic repair must be social and shared as well, borne by the government, the dominant society, and the entire community—and also at the highest levels. Reparations would include, then, institutional transformations and structural rearrangement in every area of social life. Individual attitudes matter, but they cannot drive that kind of repair.

In the early Nineteenth Century the enslaved and free people of color in Haiti organized a successful anti-colonial and anti-slavery insurrection against French colonial rule. As a condition of peace, Haiti was forced to pay a tribute (reparations) of 150 million Francs annually to France—into the Twenty-first Century. This got reparations exactly backwards. Similarly, in the US President Lincoln signed a bill in 1862 (before the Emancipation Proclamation) emancipating enslaved people in Washington, DC, and the US government got it wrong, compensating the slaveowners for the loss of their property. Slaveowners got reparations, while the formerly enslaved African Americans got nothing for their generations of unpaid and forced labor.

More recently reparations have been paid for war-related damages and for violations of human rights. When well-designed, reparations programs acknowledge suffering and provide forms of redress for harms endured. Victims have a right to receive reparations for injuries; the responsible party has a responsibility to provide redress.

The government of Argentina provided reparations to victims of human rights abuses suffered under the military dictatorship of the 1970s and 80s; Italy apologized to Libya for colonization, and paid $5 billion as part of the Italy–Libya Friendship Treaty of 2008; Canada issued an apology to Indigenous peoples in a "Statement of Reconciliation," acknowledging that the racist Indian residential schools were disastrous for victims, and providing financial over $2 billion to survivors; and in 1988 US President Ronald Reagan apologized and signed a bill authorizing payments of $20,000 to survivors of the World War II Japanese internment camps. And in 2015, Chicago issued an

official apology for the systematic torture of victims in Area 2 police district under the leadership of commander Jon Burge—the city paid $100,000 to each survivor, provided free psychological counseling and medical care as well as free tuition to city colleges for survivors and their immediate family members, a mandatory curriculum about the Jon Burge torture cases to be taught in Chicago Public Schools, and a commitment to build a permanent public memorial to honor the victims. Each of these is an example of justice received—uncomplicated and easy to endorse.

The forms that reparations take can vary widely, and the practical policies can be worked out by people of good will. But the first essential step is the admission of harm by the established government or institution that caused the harm.

~~Invest massive resources—housing, education, community health clinics, jobs, arts centers, transportation, parks and recreation—into communities that were red-lined by the federal government, and have suffered ever since.

~~Pay the "education debt"—an alternative way of looking at the so-called "education gap," a manufactured fable covering up the real story, which is a story of disinvestment, isolation, segregation, inferior physical plants, and miseducative curricula.

~~Pass H.R. 40**, i**ntroduced in the House on January 3, 2025, by Rep. Ayanna Pressley, and S. 40, the Senate companion bill introduced on January 9, 2025, by Sen. Cory Booker.

~~Pass H.R. 7927 (Land Reparations Commission Act), a bill to establish a commission to study and distribute land reparations

or one-time cash/subsidy payments to African-American descendants of enslaved people promised land (such as General Sherman's Field Order 15).

~~Pass the "Reparations Now Resolution," reintroduced on May 15, 2025, by Rep. Summer Lee alongside Reps. Rashida Tlaib and Ayanna Pressley to call on the federal government to advance descendants' reparations and back local/state efforts.

TEN) We want **freedom**.

We want peace and justice, democracy and equality, health care, housing, education, and jobs or income now. We want significant work to do and meaningful lives to create. We want to be free—not the reactionary libertarian myth of individual autonomy, but a festival of joy and creativity, of collective hopes and community possibilities unleashed.

We are not free if we are fearful of other people or imagine ourselves surrounded by danger—we aren't free if we organize our lives behind barricades, always poised for combat. We are not free if we are prevented or hindered from voting; we're not free if we're forced to attend underfunded, segregated, miseducating schools; we are not free if we have no roof over our heads; we're not free if we have no privacy and no bodily integrity, but rather are under constant auditing and mass surveillance by the government with closed circuit TV cameras, mobile trailers, and automated license plate readers; we're not free if pervasive policies and politics are uniformly based on caging and cruelty, exclusion and dehumanization.

Freedom is not and can never be an exclusively individual achievement—freedom must be worked out and accomplished in community. In a free society you're free to swing your arms, of course, but your freedom to swing your arms ends where my nose begins.

The abolition of slavery freed the enslaved workers from bondage, true, and it simultaneously freed slave-owners from their evil business, and from the anxiety of wondering when payback would come; when Black people are truly free, white people can leave behind their shaky pretense of superiority with all its attendant loneliness and stress; when women get free, men will be freed from clinging desperately to their precarious perch.

Abolitionist values—liberation, community restoration, and shared fate as opposed to the hardening practices of cruelty and punishment, revenge and retribution—motivated the ten renowned words uttered by Justice Harry Blackmun in 1994 when he announced publicly that he had become a death penalty abolitionist: "I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death." Blackmun wasn't searching for ways to make state-sanctioned murder more efficient or more palatable; he wanted to get out of the death business altogether.

An aspect of abolition is eradication or removal, true. But the more challenging and more rewarding task of abolition is the work of creation: the building of institutions and relationships, structures and cultures that would make slavery, for example, unthinkable, then prisons and massive police forces unnecessary, and exploitation obsolete. Abolition is the work of "founding a new society" because abolition eliminates a society that could

have slavery, and builds a society where slavery is impossible. This is the practice of freedom.

So abolition is not best understood as a deletion or an erasure, but rather as a collection of creative and complex acts of "world-building." What kind of world would we need to build in order to have no slavery? our forebears asked. And what kind of world could we begin to create today that would render prisons and militarized police and militarism obsolete, predation and exploitation relics of a cruel past?

We must reimagine, resist, and rebuild in the name of freedom. Striving for freedom and abolishing all manner of unfreedoms is the repudiation and nullification of oppression everywhere, and the struggle against subjugation anywhere: abuse or cruelty of any trace or tone, exploitation in any context. In order to activate and find answers to our common problems and challenges, we must develop a growing sense of our own agency, our own power, and our own possibilities, and we must come to see the situation before us, not as a fixed condition—a closed system from which we have no exit—but as a limiting situation which we can and must transform. Everything can change. And freedom is the horizon.

~~Create generously resourced and forward looking public educational opportunities, preschool through college, and abolish student debt, currently a staggering $1.72 trillion that is crushing millions of families, and has thrust 9 million people into default.

~~Generate bold initiatives for peace and reconciliation, and abolish contracts with the war industries.

~~Build a system of universal health care for all, and abolish medical debt.

~~Produce hundreds of thousands of decent and lovely public housing units, and abolish predatory loans.

~~Support direct democracy and one-person/one-vote, and abolish the electoral college.

In order for us as poor and oppressed people to be a part of a society that is meaningful, the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed. This means that we are going to have to learn to think in radical terms. I use the term ***radical*** *in its original meaning—getting down to and understanding the root cause. It means facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means by which you change that system…But one of the things that has to be faced is, in the process of wanting to change that system, how much have we got to do to find out who we are, where we have come from and where we are going….I am saying as you must say, too, that in order to see where we are going, we not only must* ***remember*** *where we have been, but we must* ***understand*** *where we have been.*

~~Ella Baker

NOTE: Send any notes, comments, additions, corrections to underthetreepod@gmail.com