THESES ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS:

Expropriate & Shut Down Oil, Gas, and Coal

Build a mass environmentalist movement to defend humanity and our planet

Dedicated to Maria

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1. The climate crisis presents an imminent threat to the existence of humankind.

1.1 The overwhelming consensus of the scientific research is definitive, irrefutable, and deathly serious. Since the Industrial Revolution, the buildup of greenhouse gas pollution has trapped increasingly more of the sun's heat within the earth's atmosphere, raising the overall temperature of the planet. This global heating process destabilizes the environmental conditions upon which human beings depend for our survival. This phenomenon has been and continues to be researched, documented, and proven exhaustively. Scientists have played the heroic role of alerting society to the crisis and consistently defending this scientific truth against repeated and ongoing attacks from the polluting industries.

1.2 The prognoses of this crisis are as numerous as they are dire, and many of its most dangerous consequences are already underway. Rising sea levels, severe flooding and droughts, the submersion of coastal cities and entire islands, massive wildfires, volatile fluctuations in weather, increasingly frequent and catastrophic hurricanes and weather events, the melting of the arctic icecaps accompanied by polar vortex conditions, the mass extinction of plants and animal species, the destruction of agriculture, and the forced migration of millions of people escaping unlivable circumstances—these are some of the known consequences of the climate crisis. Each passing day yields new evidence that those consequences are growing worse.

1.3 This global heating is rapidly progressing towards a decisive "point of no return," a point at which the heating of the earth becomes irreversible and escalates the earth's temperature to a super-hot condition that, if reached, would result in the extermination of humankind.

2. All measures to mitigate the climate crisis thus far have failed miserably, while the rate of global heating has only accelerated.

2.1 The United Nations Environment Programme recently issued its 2019 Emissions Gap Report, stating the following: "The summary findings are bleak. Countries collectively failed to stop the growth in global GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions, meaning that deeper and faster cuts are now required." The report concludes that all nations failed to achieve even the modest and 'realistic' goals to reduce emissions which had been set forth in the non-committal 2016 Paris Agreement.

2.2 Under the current regulatory policies of the world's governments, greenhouse gas emissions are not only increasing, but are actually accelerating at a record yearly growth. The rise in the earth's temperature continues to accelerate, as well, at a rate which is even faster than the projections of many scientific models—models which are meant to predict the level of heating that would occur *without* any regulatory intervention. Oil, gas, and even coal continue to be growth industries in spite of new technological developments and increased energy efficiency. Furthermore, according to the United Nations report, "there is no sign of GHG emissions peaking," which is a languid way of saying that none of the world's governments show any real signs of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, whatsoever.

3. A pervasive, fatal flaw has doomed all previous and existing government measures regarding the climate crisis: their obstinate reliance on "market-based" solutions which invariably leave the oil, gas, and coal industries intact.

3.1 Despite their ineffectiveness, nearly every major government in the world can claim to have "taken action" to address the climate crisis in some way, and those actions have various names and forms: environmental protections, maximum emissions quotas, cap-and-trade, taxes on pollution, clean energy initiatives, etc. Likewise, many of these governments have their own regulatory agencies that enforce environmental laws and policies on a daily basis. A perusal of the official names of regulations and bureaucratic departments can give the false impression that these governments have done a great deal to mitigate the climate crisis. It is therefore important to explain why, in spite of such regulatory measures, the empirical data on the climate shows that

the heating of the earth proceeds at such a pace as though nothing at all has been done to stop it.

3.2 According to the proclamations of government officials, the theory of all existing regulations is to "disincentivize" the use of oil, gas, and coal, while attempting to "incentivize" the use of clean alternatives such as solar and wind power. Taxes and emissions regulations are therefore meant to discourage the use of fossil fuels, while subsidies offset the cost of building clean energy technology. These incentives are "market-based," in that they do not directly impose upon the buying or the selling or the proprietorship of the energy supplies, but rather seek only to sway the market in a certain direction.

3.3 The net effect of these market-based regulatory measures is simply to create a barely perceptible speed bump in the path of the oil, gas, and coal industries. The speed bump is perceptible only to the accounting departments of those industries, but it is not perceptible to the global emissions output and not to the climate. The oil, gas, and coal industries, however, continue to remain highly profitable. Those industries continue selling oil, gas, and coal… *and that is the only real purpose of the market-based regulatory measures*.

4. In order to resolve the climate crisis, it is necessary to expropriate the oil, gas, and coal industries for the purpose of shutting them down.

4.1 Given what may be the shortest leap of logic ever required to address any problem of great magnitude, it is frankly an outrage that there are so few scientists—and virtually no political leaders—who are willing to speak it publicly. The logic proceeds something like the following: (a) in order to stop the overheating of the climate, it is necessary to eliminate the global emissions of carbon dioxide; (b) eliminating carbon emissions requires the elimination of oil, gas, and coal as sources of fuel; (c) eliminating the use of oil, gas, and coal would obviously entail that those industries would go out of business; (d) the oil, gas, and coal industries show no measurable market indications of going out of business anytime soon and have no intention to do so willingly; (e) therefore, it is necessary for the oil, gas, and coal industries to be shut down. It is the unavoidable logic that has transpired in private conversations between scientists and environmentalists for decades; it must become the publicly stated program for saving humankind.

4.2 Expropriation has a dual purpose: both to shut down the fossil fuel industries, as well as to finance the production of clean energy and the equipment that will run on clean energy as a fuel source. Expropriation should require the confiscation of all material and financial assets of the fossil fuel industries by the national government, the conversion of those assets into public utilities, and the rapid reallocation of those assets to rebuild the energy infrastructure on a clean basis. It is important to note that the great bulk of the accumulated wealth of those industries exists in the form of finance capital and is controlled by investors and bankers—expropriation must also be applied to those titan financiers. The program for the fossil fuel industries should be straightforward: expropriate, reallocate, eliminate.

4.3 Expropriation is regarded as an extreme measure under capitalism, and it certainly is. But the justification for it is easy enough for anyone to comprehend. In a capitalist market, everyone understands the rule that "if you break it, you pay for it." The fossil fuel industries have broken the climate. After decades of causing wars and senseless bloodshed for oil, these industries now threaten the lives of all of humanity, indiscriminately. Let us now close the chapter of history that the fossil fuel industries have dominated, so that the story of humankind has a chance to continue—hopefully towards a better and happier time.

5. Expropriation of the oil, gas, and coal industries is necessary for economic reasons, because the fundamental laws of the market dictate that the profitability of fossil fuels will otherwise prevail against the prohibitive costs of rebuilding the entire global infrastructure on a clean-energy basis.

5.1 Oil, gas, and coal are increasingly profitable and will continue to be profitable so long as any sizeable portion of the world's technology will run on them. Oil and gas, in particular, have experienced a massive revival due to two recent, historic developments. First, the successful development of hydraulic fracturing technology, or "fracking," has created a boom for the U.S. oil industry, unlocking vast potential for efficiently accessing hydrocarbons at incredible depths. Second, the melting of the arctic icecaps—one of the effects of the planet's overheating—has also consequently opened up access to the world's largest untapped oil reserves, in Russia's backyard.

5.2 While solar and wind power are free, the cost of converting the entire global infrastructure to run on them is not. Every household, factory, and office building;

every piece of machinery, every vehicle, and every appliance that runs on fossil fuels; all of the gargantuan accumulation of technology that was born from the womb of the Industrial Revolution and relies upon oil, gas, and coal—all of it must be adapted, rebuilt or replaced. It would be the largest and quite necessarily the fastest reorganization of the global economy in all of human history. And it won't be cheap. Such a reorganization may likely require sinking the entire accumulated wealth of the fossil fuel industries just to pay for our continued existence.

5.3 It sounds almost too obvious to require saying, and yet it must be said: there is absolutely no *laissez faire* market mechanism that will result in abandoning billions of dollars of potential profits underground while spending billions of dollars to build solar panels, windmills, and new infrastructure. No intelligent, informed, and educated person can pretend otherwise, and yet that is exactly what so many leaders are attempting to do. The market will not solve the problem. The market *is* the problem.

6. Expropriation of the oil, gas, and coal industries is necessary for political reasons, because the wealth and power of those industries is otherwise sufficient to purchase politicians wholesale and take over entire governments, thereby undoing all previous environmental policies which fall short of expropriation.

6.1 When President Donald Trump moved into the White House, the fossil fuel industries moved in with him. The State Department and the Environmental Protection Agency fell under the control of oil and coal executives. Seemingly every pore of the government became infested by corporate parasites sucking from the national treasury. The modest environmental regulations put forth by the previous Obama administration, which have since proved insufficient to mitigate the climate crisis, were nonetheless obliterated with the stroke of a pen.

6.2 This is the reality of money in politics—it is a reality that has repeated thousands of times around the world, and it will keep repeating at the behest of anyone who commands sufficient wealth to enforce it. The political result of the "market-based" environmental regulations, those which leave the fossil fuel industries intact, is that they permit the possibility that all such regulations can be undone soon after they are implemented. Expropriation, on the other hand, is a means of depriving the fossil fuel industries of exactly this possibility.

6.3 Grass-roots environmentalists cannot compete with the wealth and influence of the fossil fuel industries on a regular electoral basis—even in the most democratic nations—on the premises of lobbying and market-based measures. No nation on earth has managed to enforce even modest emissions regulations consistently and effectively. Each swing of the political pendulum can feel like a ticking doomsday clock counting down to the end of human history. This volatility means that any theory of gradualism is politically unviable. Expropriation must be implemented at the first opportunity; it must be done swiftly and thoroughly.

6.4 But not all nations are democratic. In smaller nations whose economies are completely dominated by the fossil fuel industries—most notably Russia and the Middle Eastern regimes—authoritarian governments are the rule. And in the recent period, even the longstanding democracies of Europe and the United States have become unstable and have shown their susceptibility towards descending into autocratic and neo-fascist meltdowns. This instability has many common threads, which all attach in some manner to the fossil fuel industries and to Russia. This elaborate web of political forces is a profound obstacle which environmentalists must learn how to overcome.

7. To achieve the expropriation of the oil, gas, and coal industries, it is necessary to build a mass environmentalist movement that is independent from all political parties which rely upon corporate funding—a mass movement that builds its alliances among all those who suffer under the oppression of the oil, gas, and coal oligarchs.

7.1 More than a decade ago, environmentalists watched with hopeful enthusiasm as former Vice President Al Gore and other celebrity reformers sought to persuade world leaders and corporate executives of the necessity to address the climate crisis. Under today's political conditions and worsening climate, that hopeful period looks naively utopian in hindsight. The celebrity reformers, along with their method of appealing to the rich and powerful using the handy tools of rational arguments and moral persuasion, achieved nothing. Or, insofar as the planet can report, less than nothing.

7.2 The rich and powerful would only embrace environmentalism as part of a public image for themselves, as an advertising gimmick, and as a means of avoiding scrutiny for their crimes. In all cases in which environmentalism presented a direct threat to profits, the corporate gurus decided that the environmentalist

movement had to change—to adapt its demands for the benefit of the corporate "friends" of the movement and embrace market-based solutions. Through this process, just as the official leaders of the environmentalist movement seemed to be ascending to the top of society and gaining influence, they were actually descending into corruption and becoming part of the problem that they had purported to solve.

7.3 Yesterday's wave of elite environmentalism splashed against the hard rock of corporate interests, and never moved an inch further. The conflict of interest was obvious: the corporate elite could never embrace the idea that entire industries—some of the largest and most lucrative industries in world history—would need to cease operating. This was much more than an "inconvenience" to them. It didn't matter whether the corporations had ties to the oil industry, and it didn't matter whether the corporations supported liberal or conservative political parties; all of them could agree that business must go on. And it did.

7.4 The lessons of the old movement are painfully clear: environmentalists must not step into the trap of adapting to the corporate "allies" or their political mouthpieces. New leaders must step forward to carry the movement beyond its old shortcomings. Independence from corporate interests, independence from the politicians and political parties who rely on corporate funding, is imperative for the movement to be able to speak with its own voice and assert its own demands. Otherwise, the movement will continue splashing against the same hard rock, ineffectually seeking progress through the same kinds of market-based measures which have not worked and will not work. The leaders of the movement must speak the plain truth: the oil, gas, and coal industries must be shut down.

7.5 Someone cries out, "But without our super-special-important corporate friends, what shall we do?" The answer: *find better friends*. Just take a look around—look at the trail of human destruction that has been wrought by this crisis, and you will find along that trail millions of people, bloodied but not broken, who want to survive and are looking for leadership. Look to the new generation of youth, who are not willing to accept that the end of the world must arrive before their own lives have barely begun. Look to the freedom fighters who are trying to save their democratic rights from the tyranny of oil oligarchs in authoritarian governments. Look to the poor and oppressed who have no stake in monopoly capital and no businesses from which to profit. And look to the millions of immigrants and refugees, fleeing from the hottest parts of the world and searching desperately for freedom, for a home. These are the real friends of the environmentalist movement; these are the real allies. From that trail will emerge the greatest leaders that the movement has ever seen. And from those friendships, may we all find new reasons why life is worth living, and why humankind is worth saving.

8. The mass environmentalist movement must unite in alliance with the global struggles to defend democracy and to stop the rise of authoritarian and neo-fascist regimes.

8.1 For many years, environmentalists in the United States and Europe have taken for granted an institutional asset that cannot be taken for granted anymore: a free and democratic government through which it might be possible to make the case for solving the climate crisis. Today, democracy is under attack even in the places where it was presumed to be the most secure. In the U.S., Britain, France, and Italy, just to name a few, far-right and neo-fascist movements have emerged, and have started oozing through the cracks in the armor of democracy—cracks that very few people in those nations had known to exist. While in certain nations, these developments encroached upon the democratic institutions without fully penetrating the walls, in other nations the infestation reached truly freakish proportions, e.g., Brexit and Trump. In all cases, however, the corrosive substance started to erode the national democratic norms.

8.2 Amid this bizarre concoction of anti-immigrant demagogues, white supremacists, business tycoons, and astoundingly deranged egomaniacs, there were also a few relatively stable elements which could be distilled—Putin, Russia, sanctions, oil. From these distilled elements, a clearer picture began to emerge. The U.S. and NATO allies had recently enforced heavy sanctions against Russia in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The sanctions specifically targeted the Russian oil industry, by restricting the oil industries in the NATO countries from conducting business with the Russian oil oligarchs. But while imposing these sanctions, the NATO allies were blindsided by what would come next. Putin held a trump card in his hand with which to retaliate: the oil industries in the NATO countries are far more loyal to their own profits than to any concerns for national security or world peace. And the sanctions were simply bad for business on both sides. With just a bit of funding directed towards far-right organizations and political hacks, the toxic fluids began pouring out into the open,

and the NATO allies unexpectedly found themselves also contending with threats from within.

8.3 The threats to democracy are real and immediate. The environmentalist movement must not sit on the sidelines. In this fight, the environmentalist movement can join forces with necessary allies, gathering new strength and momentum in the effort to solve the climate crisis. And the environmentalist movement must likewise give its full strength to the struggle for democracy, or else the dangers for human existence magnify exponentially. The task of overthrowing any polluting industry is tremendously difficult even under the most free and democratic conditions —that task becomes immeasurably more difficult if it requires overthrowing an authoritarian government, as well.

9. The mass environmentalist movement must unite in alliance with the global struggles for immigrant rights and for the liberation of the neo-colonial "third world" nations.

9.1 Sometimes traveling on foot for hundreds of miles, and in other cases stowed away in tight cargo spaces with scarce air circulation; often making the journey in large caravans of hundreds of people, but even braving the difficulties alone without assistance when there is no other option; traversing hot deserts, burrowing under fences, climbing over walls, crossing rivers in makeshift rafts or just by swimming, crossing the Mediterranean Sea, carrying no possessions other than hope and courage, and somehow finding the determination to keep pressing forward to a foreign land in the quest to find freedom—the largest and most extraordinary migration of people since World War II is both the most heartrending evidence that the world is changing, and is also one of the most profound events that is itself changing the world. Millions of immigrants experience the world as though living outside of society, and yet are actually at the very center of everything significant that is happening right now—the immigrants and refugees of today's crisis are the people whose struggle for existence is likely to be determinative for the existence of every other human being on the planet. Whether the outcome of *this* struggle is liberating or tragic, the rest of the world will share the same fate.

9.2 The regions of the world from which people are fleeing in exodus—primarily Africa, Central America, and the Middle East—are also the hottest parts of the world, and are experiencing the effects of the global heating process more acutely than their northern neighbors. These regions of the world are also poorer, and serve as neo-colonial outposts for the richer nations. They are subjugated by wars and violence during the worst of times, and are subjugated by finance capital during the intermissions. Due to the most parasitic phenomenon of market economics, as more and more finance capital is invested in these regions, the poorer they become. Global heating has greatly increased their poverty. Yet in these regions' long and dramatic histories of hardships and struggles for liberation, today's crisis marks the first time that the struggle for human freedom has overwhelmingly taken the form of escaping these regions, altogether.

9.3 There is no single factor causing the mass migration, but rather a conflagration of forces: the climate crisis, the imperialist exploitation of the neo-colonies, the growth of authoritarian despotism, and the intensification of violence and war. However, these forces do not exist in isolation from each other. Quite the contrary. As the mass migration of people traverses the globe, the downstream currents of the movement all flow in the same direction, moving as though guided by gravitational waves towards the very empires that caused each and every one of these crises: the United States and Europe.

9.4 The arrival of the mass migration within the imperialist nations has become the most consequential political dynamic at every destination, changing the very social fabric of each national landscape. But that arrival has also put on display the real relationship between the imperialist nations and the neo-colonies. The journey of the mass migration, which had originated from the hottest nations on earth, increasingly arrived to the most chilling reception—held captive in concentration camps, confined in small cages, shackled in prisons, and funneled through a deportation machine. The governments of the United States and Europe have endeavored to turn back the tide of the migration and to restore the old order, even though the mass migration itself is the most striking proof that the old order is damaged beyond repair. The mass migration is sounding the alarm for the future of the world, for as the same forces that drove the refugees from their homes continue to expand and increasingly affect the imperialist nations, there will eventually be no place left on earth to which the human species can migrate. The U.S. and Europe's beliefs in never-ending prosperity are an ideological illusion, a dream bubble waiting to burst—the immigrants and refugees have arrived with the truth.

9.5 The issue of immigrant rights is now at the center of whether entire regimes will rise or fall. In the U.S. and Europe—which are experiencing the rise of neo-fascist movements—the political power of the oil oligarchs and

every authoritarian tendency relies on their ability to conjure up and mobilize anti-immigrant, racist hatred. Trump, Brexit, and other corresponding phenomena have galvanized their public support through the politics of a racial purge, through the promise to build impenetrable barriers against the mass migration, and through the systematic persecution of immigrants within the national borders. While that is sufficient reason to regard the immigrant rights struggle as pivotal to the direction of history, there is still another side of the coin. In the face of the immense danger and terror that these regimes are creating, what few people currently realize is that the anti-immigrant foundation of such regimes is also their critical weakness. The tyrants have constructed their towering bastilles upon just a single pillar; if that pillar can be broken, then the entire structure must come crashing down. The struggle for immigrant rights is thereby not merely a cumulative product of the present social crises, it is also politically decisive to their outcomes.

9.6 The mass migration continues to grow. The climate crisis, among other related hardships, will send millions more refugees to the U.S. and Europe over the coming years. Those powerful governments, which have done next to nothing to preserve the climate for human survival, stand in stark contrast to the heroic and extraordinary struggle for survival which is arriving on their doorsteps every day. In this struggle, it is clear where humankind must place its hopes for the future. The great movement for human survival *does* exist, and it is becoming the largest movement that the world has ever seen.

10. The mass environmentalist movement must unite in alliance with the global struggles against monopoly capital and economic inequality.

11. The role of scientists in the environmentalist movement must not be limited to telling the truth about the climate: scientists must also tell the truth about the political failures to address the climate crisis, and must tell the truth about the necessity to shut down the oil, gas, and coal industries.

12. Faced with the immense, historical challenge to overthrow the wealth and power of an entire sector of industry, the mass environmentalist movement must learn from the most heroic, far-sighted, and self-sacrificing struggles against powerful oppressors in human history.

This statement is issued by allied immigrant rights and civil rights organizations that understand the central role that the climate crisis plays in mass migration and the necessity to defend the free movement of people and how the fight for full equality for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers is fundamental to the defense of democracy and to win environmental justice. 9 December 2019

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