

What To Do The Morning After The Rebellion

Don't Go Back To Sleep



I spent the last 4 days in the Extinction Rebellion camp at Marble Arch in London. Yesterday, while police stepped up their presence on site, the protestors held an assembly to discuss their next steps. They decided to end this phase of the protest, clear up the camp, and leave within a couple of days.

This an intensely risky moment, emotionally and strategically. The phase change could knock you off your feet, especially if this is your

first time participating in a major mobilisation. I've been in this position before, back in 2011 when we decided to close the camp at Occupy Wellington. So I wanted to write you this letter. Granddad Rich has a story for you. Please imagine a rocking chair, a pipe, a pot of tea.

Back in my day...

Joining Occupy absolutely blew my mind, and blew my heart right open. It was the first time I felt the courage that comes before hope, the first time that "solidarity" moved from my head down into my heart, my blood, my hands. I reckon I did 30 years of growing up in 3 weeks. It felt like we were on the front edge of history, wide awake and fully alive at last.

So leaving the camp feels super risky. At this moment, despair is the biggest threat. *Is this the end? Do I go back to my normal life now? Was I deluded when I felt like we were changing the world?*

First off, I know you know this, but humour me while I remind you anyway: the camp is closing but there'll be more actions. These weeks in London were just one line of an epic beautiful song. Extinction Rebellion will carry the tune for maybe a verse or two, and then some other movement will pick it up and carry on. When I joined Occupy in 2011, I had no idea that I was entering into a lineage, generations of resistance made invisible by the histories I learned in school, a thousand grandmothers I never knew the names of. Occupy dispersed, but the lineage continues. I watched it surging through Hungary, Taiwan, Brazil, Korea... the movement of movements is everywhere. Your job is not to bring an end to injustice, to stop climate change, or to replace capitalism. You just have to **keep going**.

“It is not your responsibility to finish the work of perfecting the world, but you are not free to desist from it either.” — Rabbi Tarfon, Pirke Avot 2:21

The surest way to guarantee your endurance is with *company*.

If you're not sure what to do next, I can tell you what worked for me. After we left Occupy, a small crew of my closest allies made a commitment to each other. We made a pledge to **keep going**: to let go of individualism and hold tight to the mutual aid, the care, the passion and the purpose that we found in camp.

Eventually we started a tech co-op to spread the meme of participatory democracy. Now I have a consulting company helping groups to get beyond hierarchy. For the past 7 years I've been paid to work on the problems that feel most urgent to me. I'm free from the discouraging, dehumanising, exhausting grind of my old bullshit jobs. I'm not rich, but I'm satisfied, deep down in my guts. It's not all plain sailing, but I have an anchor, a rudder, and crewmates I trust with my life. I can't tell you how much my life has improved since I found my meaningful work, and found the people to share it with. Sure, that's partly down to privilege and good luck, but don't underestimate the value of a clear intention. It's in my head every day like a mantra: *mutual aid, meaningful work, mutual aid, meaningful work*.

Probably you're not going to start a tech co-op. If you're committed to Extinction Rebellion, you can join one of the many local XR groups. But XR don't have a monopoly on solidarity: you can form a savings pool, a reading club, a shared house, a freelancer collective, a community choir... just don't go on alone. At the very least, find 3 or 4 people you can meet with every couple of weeks: form your crew now while the enthusiasm is high, so you can hold each other up when the

energy gets low. If you need inspiration or resources for how to do this well, check out microsolidarity.cc.

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you

Don't go back to sleep

You must ask for what you really want

Don't go back to sleep

People are going back and forth across the doorsill where the two worlds touch

The door is round and open

Don't go back to sleep

— Rumi

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