

**The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter:**  
***Looking at the World Today as if Facts Matter***

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*Here we explore the latest facts, actions, and perspectives on the New Great Transformation of the Earth System, as it unfolds before our eyes. We apply the Hopeful Realism we all need to work through the greatest predicament in human history.*

***Latest News from the Hopeful Realist***

**The Inevitable and Necessary Attitude Adjustment.** Chet Cooper was a tall old Montana cowboy who many years ago taught my son how to train and ride a horse. My son loved horses and so did Chet, who was old school. I have seen remarkable horse trainers who never ‘broke’ a horse; they simply gained trust and cooperation by gradual methods of instilling familiarity with first a blanket, then a saddle, and finally the trainer on the back of the horse. It could be done in a day by the best of them.

Well, I don’t quite remember Chet’s method for initially training a horse. But what I clearly remember was his method for ‘getting a horse’s attention’ when it was misbehaving. He would say, “This horse needs an attitude adjustment!” He would accomplish the attitude adjustment by applying a swift kick in the horse’s belly with his big boot. The horse would suddenly stand still and comply with directions.

The ‘attitude adjustment’ effectively reminded the horse who was in charge. Now, that may seem overly harsh to the suburban mind, or even abusive. It was a rare event, since much of what a horse is trained to do is what comes naturally, which is not to say that horses are never abused, especially in the thoroughbred racing business. But that’s another story, mostly about money.

When I consider all the complexities of the climate emergency, the ecological crisis, and the ‘misbehavior’ of the global political economy in relation to the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced, it makes me think of Chet Cooper’s method of deploying an ‘attitude adjustment.’ It is abundantly clear that Nature is in charge, but so many folks are distracted by the glitter and spice of the industrial-consumer culture. I have thought more than once that people will only pay attention to the existential threats to our civilization when they get a metaphorical swift kick to the belly with a big boot.

Record-breaking droughts, floods, hurricanes, crop failures, accelerating migrations, etc., etc., have all had a profound effect on the people who were directly affected, if not on people living far away. Abstract admonitions by climate activists, however accurate, just don't have the same effect as the actual destruction of one's home in a hurricane of unprecedented force, spun off an ocean where temperatures had reached nearly 100 degrees Fahrenheit. That causes a quick attitude adjustment.

A recent [survey](#) by the Yale University Program in Climate Change Communication revealed some interesting information on the perceptions and attitudes of Americans regarding the reality of the increasingly severe weather events and changes in what was once 'normal' climate. It took a long time, but now 74% of Americans recognize that climate change is happening. But only 20% understand how strong the consensus among climate scientists is. Regarding risk, only 48% recognize that the U.S. is being harmed by climate change, while 44% have personally experienced that harm in some way. It would seem that only direct personal experience can overcome anti-climate-change propaganda, forcing an 'attitude adjustment.'

Apparently, all the information and admonitions from scientists and climate-action advocates just do not add up to a 'boot in the belly.' I have long worried that in the context of powerful billionaire-funded anti-climate-science and greenwashing propaganda would delay public recognition of what is now a climate emergency until some widespread catastrophic event forced a collective 'attitude adjustment,' resulting in concerted action to salvage what is left of the halcyon days of the Holocene era. Let's hope we can 'get it together' and mobilize for survival before that happens, which could be any day, week, or month. Time is so short now and things are moving so fast that the needed attitude adjustment may come much sooner than expected and will be far more painful than a big boot in the belly.

**The Updated Update of the Publishing Plan stands.** The first volume of *The Edge of Illusion Trilogy* is complete. Preparations for publishing ***Holding It Together: Social Control in an Era of Great Transformation*** in the next few months are underway. The tentative publication date is January 10, 2024, maybe sooner. Traditional publishers take from eighteen months to two years, sometimes even more, from signing a contract to an actual publication date. By publishing the book independently, we can do it in 6 months or less.

My eBook ***HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto*** remains available for free download from [Kindle Unlimited](#). The price will soon go to normal. Please give it a rating/review on [GoodReads.com](#). Or, [review and rate](#) *Hopeful Realism* on Amazon. On Amazon, do so by clicking the button on the lower left of the book's Amazon page below "Customer Reviews," and say a few words about what you think about the issues and how I frame them.

**Note:** Past issues of this Newsletter are available, archived on my web site:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/hopeful-realist-newsletter/>

## ***LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary***

**The Reality of Our Impossible Dream.** Many good ideas are out there regarding the technical changes in our economy and technology we must make to reduce the damage that the global economy continues to do to the Earth System. Most of them are valid and important, which is a key to our underlying predicament. Everyone has a preference.

So many say, 'It's overpopulation,' and we need to empower women and girls globally to limit reproduction. Others say, 'it's overconsumption.' How could either be wrong? Still others say 'it's overproduction, extraction, and waste' of the globalized capitalist economy, which is also rather hard to deny. Many others say it is our 'mindset' or our 'predatory patriarchal culture.' Certainly, the consumer culture has gone off the rails, with a great deal of 'enabling' by the marketing and advertising industries. They are all right of course, because we live and participate in a SYSTEM, in which all those things and others contribute to our headlong rush into chaos and collapse.

Many agree that we must stop, or reduce carbon emissions in the extreme—the climate data trends are clear. Others say that it is not just emissions. It's the ecological destruction by the '*global industrial-consumer political economy*.' That is an awkward phrase I use to capture the key elements of the complex system in which we all participate. It points to an extremely *complex adaptive system* that has already overshoot the Earth System's capacity to carry its load—which is why a deep, vast, and great transformation is now absolutely necessary if a small part of today's world population is to survive and maybe, eventually, even flourish.

That system has failed to adapt to or mitigate the destruction it has caused, because its culture of power and hierarchy has blocked negative feedback loops from informing it of the processes that are driving its own imminent demise. Despite the conclusive scientific [evidence and warnings](#), the elites of the global political economy continue to ignore the obvious messages the Earth System is sending us.

Currently, world population is about 7.8 billion. Christopher Tucker, Chair, American Geographic Society, estimates that the Earth could sustain a population of about [3 billion people](#). I would add that that is a good estimate, but only if we can also RESTORE and REGENERATE most of the fast destabilizing ecosystems and other sub-systems that comprise the whole Earth System. That and what evolutionary biologists, climatologists, and Earth System scientists have explained, suggest that a New Great Transformation of human societies is now imperative—the last great transformation, as Karl [Polanyi](#) put it, was the industrial revolution that produced so much, yet got us into this mess.

The linear Newtonian predatory patriarchal WORLDVIEW drove the industrial revolution and all that followed, having long since overpowered the matrifocal cultures of some societies, which lived in relative harmony with nature and valued art over war. But here we are, on the cusp of the end of the industrial era, with apparently nowhere to go, if we are to 'follow' the greenwashing' business-as-usual grifters on high.

So, for me, it comes down to one thing (in all of this complexity). We must initiate, accelerate, and implement *A New Great Transformation* at the family/community/ecosystem level all over the world. It must be organized and driven by women and girls, who are far better prepared to engage in mutual aid and cooperation for safety and survival than are men, of whom as many as can should join them in organizing distributed networks of trust and action at all levels, from local to global. (Cf. [GirlPlanet.Earth](http://GirlPlanet.Earth) and <https://www.shechangesclimate.org/> )

One final point. I have read and heard so many excellent assessments of where we are and how we got here technologically and industrially, yet we just stand here (seemingly dumbfounded) and talk. We know WHAT must be done TECHNICALLY—stop the fossil-fueled 'technosphere,' reducing carbon emissions and the climate-ecological destruction that the industrial-consumer economy forces—but we seem to have no clue as to how to get there from here.

Setting atmospheric carbon goals by 2030 or restoring wetlands and tropical forests, or conserving energy (little talk about that, just add EVs and giant solar or wind power plants), etc., etc., etc., ARE almost ALL NECESSARY. But again, HOW is it to be done, and by WHOM?

The only answer I can come up with is to generate strong distributed networks of women and girls, and the men who are willing to support them, to MOBILIZE large active segments of local/regional populations. A global social movement must take direct climate and ecological actions, many of which will be in direct conflict with "property rights," corporate power, the wealthy, and institutional authorities of various kinds at every scale.

In sociological terms we need a global social movement the likes of which the world has never seen. And, we need it now. Women and girls are the most capable of organizing the power of numbers to overcome the power of the patriarchal global political economy, which refuses to act for our survival.

For more Hopeful Realist discussions of these and related matters, go to various blog posts at: <https://thehopefulrealist.com/the-hopeful-realist-blog/>

### ***Today's Featured Image:***

***I have often said that we are at a turning point, a tipping point, a point of no return. Could it be all three? Yes. We are already at a point where, although the system of which we are members is heading for a dead end. We must pivot and turn in a new direction or face the collapse of civilization. We face multiple ecological and climate tipping points beyond which turning in a new direction will no longer work. We must turn now to have a chance to form an ecological civilization.***



### ***Books and other Sources on the New Great Transformation***

One of the biggest practical problems faced by those who would reduce greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere is that CO<sub>2</sub> and Methane sources are so many and are scattered all over the world. Climate TRACE “is a non-profit coalition of organizations building a timely, open, and accessible inventory of exactly where greenhouse gas emissions are coming from.” They use satellite imaging sensing data, institutional records, “artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to analyze over 59 trillion bytes of data from more than 300 satellites, more than 11,100 sensors, and numerous additional sources of emissions information from all over the world.” They document the actual emissions from specific locations. With precise location data, users can identify the organization responsible for a particular source of emissions.

*Climate TRACE website: <https://climatetrace.org/> CLIMATE TRACE:  
Independent Greenhouse Gas Emissions Tracking.*

I just do not know who is using this data in order to initiate emissions restrictions. Al Gore is one of the organizers of this effort; this may be the best thing he’s ever done for the climate. The TRACE website, however, does not provide information on who is using this trove of information to target sources for eliminating or reducing emissions. What may be missing is the political will and/or legal power of diverse authorities to take effective action to shut down the

worst offenders first—who likely have the most political and economic power—to optimize the application of this data for global emissions reductions.

### *Quotable Quotes*

One thing that is increasingly clear is that the world's most powerful institutions, from mega-corporations to the largest governments, are just not moving significantly to reduce the damage being done by the everyday operations of the global industrial-consumer political economy—what Dmitri Orlov calls “the technosphere.” Unless they can be forced to take actions appropriate to the emergency situation facing humanity, then all is lost.

*The big banks and global corporations will continue to pursue their interests regardless of the costs in human misery and ecological devastation.*

~ <https://occupytheearth.org/manifesto-s4/>

That is why it is necessary to mobilize people for climate/ecological action. Only massive people power now seems feasible as a method to force radical change at the highest and every other level of every society that participates in the global political economy. That would be pretty much everyone, in different degrees. To do anything less seems not only counter-productive, but downright suicidal. At the same time, we must understand that the big banks and global corporations are in control. Only a massive global social movement is likely to have a chance to turn in the direction of initiating a deep transformation of industrial political economies so that we can build an ecological civilization in its ashes. For that to happen industrial consumers will need an attitude adjustment.

See you in two weeks. Meanwhile, stay safe, check out my blog posts at [The Hopeful Realist.com](#) and read [HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto](#).