

# IMAGINE

... a system that is democratic and equitable, organized and carried out to fulfill human needs in ways that regenerate and maintain a healthy biosphere.

— Fred Magdoff & Chris Williams, *Creating an Ecological Society: toward a revolutionary transformation*

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Welcome to the first issue of Imagine, an occasional pamphlet devoted to envisioning what a better world could be like and ways we can make it real. If we cannot imagine a better world, no path will take us there. This vision is a work in progress — we welcome your ideas for consideration and discussion (email is below). Future issues of Imagine will continue to expand on the vision and contemplate making it happen.

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## Portal to a Better Future

A crisis is also an opportunity. The pandemic has created a rupture with our old way of life, one that has created newfound hardship for many people, along with greater hardship for those whose lives were already hard. But a rupture is also an opening, making both more urgent and more possible the creation of a new way of life that is better for humanity and for the planet that is our only home.

The coronavirus pandemic has sliced through the curtain of denial that separates the daily lives of the relatively fortunate from the hard truths that would disrupt them. Some of us have access to relatively healthy food, clean air and water, good medical care. Others do not. Some of us can isolate ourselves in safe and uncrowded homes, work and communicate from home, exercise in a park. Others cannot. Some have access to good education and opportunities to participate meaningfully in society, whereas others face brutal repression, discrimination, and exploitation.

***“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.***

***We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”***

**— Arundhati Roy**

In addition to highlighting the injustice of our society, the pandemic also reveals the repercussions of our disregard for our place in the natural world. As we exploit the last pristine places, devastate ecosystems and disrupt the climate, crowd livestock into factory farms and feedlots, and pollute our en-

vironment with the toxic refuse of industries churning out products we don't need, we increase our vulnerability to disease and the risk of novel transfers of microbes from non-human animals to humans. This pandemic is but one consequence of our destructive way of life. By making us sick, it draws our attention to how we have made the earth sick and, in the process, diminished our own ability to flourish.

At the same time, we have seen skies and waters clearing of pollution, and we have heard the birds sing in quiet streets. We have witnessed the courage of health care work-

ers and their devotion to caring for others. We have felt gratitude for the underpaid workers who risk their lives to harvest and deliver our food. We have been given a tiny glimpse of what the world could be like. Of what matters.

This is a time of transformation. Societies have changed before, and they will change again. Our world is not going to return to "normal" and it shouldn't. The new normal we achieve depends on our ability to conceive the world we want and our determination to create it.

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## Let us begin

What are some principles that might help to establish a different system of social, political, and economic organization?

### Reclaim the commons

The commons consists of the cultural and natural resources that impact all members of a society and should be accessible to them.

Health is a commons. It depends on everyone having good food, pure water, a clean and safe environment, freedom from harmful stress, and access to the medical care they need, when they need it. If we had adequate public health infrastructure, universal free access to medical care, and a healthier living environment for all, we could handle COVID-19 and other health issues far more successfully.

Education is a commons. All progress is built on the contributions of many people over the course of history and prehistory. Knowledge and culture is the common heritage of humanity and should be freely provided to everyone. Our land and water, our soil, forests, mountains, rivers, and oceans,

are a commons, one which we share with all life on earth. These things should not be commodities that are privately owned, bought, and sold.

### Provision of needs, rather than accumulation of wealth.

True prosperity rests on the ability to develop as a person and lead a fulfilling life, not on the accumulation of money and material things. Material things can serve a purpose, but neither they nor the accumulation of property and power nor endless economic growth should be an end in itself.

### Sharing rather than hoarding

Do we really need all that toilet paper? We'll come back to this topic in future issues.

### Value wild nature

The wild is where we come from. It lifts our spirits and refreshes us, just as living ecosystems refresh our air and water. Wild nature is something to be restored, expanded, and cherished, not beaten back and feared.