

# Justice and Solidarity in Action

Some sections of the XR movement take a position that because we are in a climate and ecological emergency that we must only focus on climate change and not be “distracted” by “other issues” or movements. But there is no climate change issue that’s separate from “other issues.”

All issues are interlinked but climate change in particular is inextricably linked to and caused by many systemic issues such as migration, war, famine, racism, imperialism, colonialism, sexism, food security, justice, capitalism and more. The climate and ecological crisis is devastating the most vulnerable - communities of color, indigenous people, poor people and non human species. An approach that tries to separate each other by issue is morally bankrupt. We are based in love and support for each other. We must be for each other first and foremost.

Some people raise strategic objections to supporting “other” issues as part of XR’s strategy. But the argument for solidarity is just as strong when it comes to strategy. We can only fight this systemically and together. Strategically it’s a huge mistake to think that Extinction Rebellion or any other movement can win by taking an approach of just focusing on “climate”. We invite you to read resistance history and you will see a history full of movements in solidarity with each other.

Please consider: What chance does a movement whose goal is a rebellion on a scale never seen before in the US have to get anywhere near succeeding without being in strong relationship with as many movements as possible in the US and abroad? Extinction Rebellion is not the rebellion. We are only one small part of a movement that will have to involve hundreds of thousands of people and countless organizations. How will we possibly build relationships and trust with organizations if we are committed to not supporting other movements? A rebellion on our own is a failure from the start.

We don’t just need each other for strength in numbers and wisdom and experience, we also need each other just to survive as a movement. Strategically, all who work for change in the US work in an environment of ever increasing repression and inhumanity. For anyone who thinks that as people fighting climate change “our issue” is separate and we can fight for it without getting involved in “other issues” we’d ask you to consider this: We live under a government that is using the military to mass arrest families. Children.

What do we think that same government - which is owned by the fossil fuel industry and whose Dept of Defense is the single largest consumer of oil in the world - is gonna do to people who are organizing to shut down the fossil fuel industry if we get anywhere near to succeeding?

Why do we think oil companies have private armies?

Extinction Rebellion is a civil disobedience movement. Government moves towards fascism affect all movements, but especially endangers groups engaged in civil disobedience. We don't organize in a vacuum. All climate movements in the US - especially people of color and indigenous people - are already being surveilled, repressed, subject to ever increasing levels of criminalization, sued etc. Look at what the government, local cops, and corporations did to the brave fighters at Standing Rock. In response to Standing Rock the government tried to pass laws in six states "designed to protect drivers who strike protesters." Bills were introduced in 18 states in 2017 to increase penalties to intimidate and silence rebellion, most of which didn't pass. Many of those involved trying to prevent people from blocking roads. What will happen when a rebellion - which includes XR - tries to shut down the country on a scale never seen before? The repression and outright violence against movements will escalate. When that happens, what we will have as movements are the relationships and trust we've built with other movements.

The famous quote by Martin Niemöller is relevant here:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me.

We know from decades of experience of resistance history worldwide that we must work with and for many movements to have any hope of our movement surviving, much less winning.

To be specific, if for example, we don't fight this government when it goes after families, we are strengthening their ability and expanding their political legitimacy to go after other people and activists and ourselves.

But let's be clear. As we wrote above, this is not transactional. We must first, last, and always center love and support in everything we do. Even if we did organize in a

vacuum and the mass deportations of human beings and abortion becoming effectively illegal and the rise of fascism was not gonna affect Extinction Rebellion's work, we still encourage you to consider this:

We must fight for each other simply because people are suffering. Strategy can't ever be a reason to not center our humanity. We must be for each other or we have lost our way.

A core part of XR US is justice and solidarity. We are working on building a community of love and respect for all movements, for all people, human and non human. We are in the process of organizing opportunities for collective education on the rich resistance history and the history and current manifestations of the deeply unequal, cruel, and destructive way of life and systems we live in. The national team is working towards having a team that isn't primarily white. And there are efforts building to address core issues in XR that are not helping create a culture that's rooted in justice and solidarity.

In order to win together, we must know each other, care for each other, know ourselves, and know as best as we can how we and the world we live in impacts those who are most vulnerable.

We are building a resource list to support local groups in supporting movements and learning about anti oppression. We are building towards supporting all XR members to engage in a process of self knowledge, accountability, building community and taking action in support of those who are most impacted by the systems feeding the climate and ecological emergency.

Most of XR US is primarily white. We are writing up recommendations for how to build groups that aren't primarily white. How to form accountable relationships with frontline communities. And how to do outreach and solidarity work. For now, here's some key things to keep in mind:

Good people with good intentions still often make the mistake of treating people of color, Black people, and Indigenous people as a monolith. And primarily white groups doing outreach to people of color or people of color groups, without knowledge/preparation, can quickly lead to tokenizing and being patronizing. It's crucial to take responsibility and get informed by looking for anti racist groups whose work involves helping white people get informed and take action.

It's not a good idea to generally seek out people of color or groups to help white people or groups learn about racism or in general educate white people. There are tons of good books, documentaries, and organizations that offer education, training and resources. We are in the process of generating a list of resources.

Here are two:

Anti Oppression Resource and Training Alliance  
SURJ - Showing Up for Racial Justice

It's also important to prioritize relationship building and solidarity work. Sometimes mainly white groups can consciously or unconsciously view outreach to people of color as transactional. This is very wrong and won't work. We all need each other. Building relationships with movements and people is first and foremost because we are human beings and we care for our each other. It's not to get pats on the back or so we can get something in return.

It's best for mainly white groups to approach people of color groups from a place of humility, wanting to learn, and offering support. It's not good to approach people of color groups like, "Hey, we have a great group, here's what we're doing, why don't you come work for us?" Instead, offer support to people of color groups' work that you align with. Find out about what they are working on. Ask how you can support. Promote their events. Organize fundraisers if that's wanted. Show up if appropriate.

Just like any relationship building process, building relationships takes time. Go slow. Follow their lead. Trust won't be automatic, understandably. It's good to listen, support, and slowly build relationship.

Here's some resources for now:

Indigenous Environmentalism 101

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MwfRiOTZ9fEvWhTthv5-TX2GwKrRzOTSa1NAPHk5tN0/edit>

Check out many more resources here:

<https://organizingforpower.org/anti-oppression-resources-exercises/>