

The Leap Manifesto

By Naomi Klein, Synopsis by Kathy Wallace

After saying “No” to Trump, what do we really want?

After 9/11, we were all in shock. And because we were in shock, we allowed – even encouraged – our representatives in Washington to enact legislation that gave away our rights in the name of security and authorized our first endless war.

Now we are in shock again with the election of Donald Trump.

Naomi Klein is author of “The Shock Doctrine,” in which she explored how politicians use disasters to confuse and disorient democratic electorates. Based on her research, Klein recommends five steps for resisting Trump *:

Step 1. Know what’s coming. Klein expects Trump to take advantage of a crisis (natural or engineered) that will be used as cover to “impose some sort of state of exception or emergency where the usual rules of democracy no longer apply. ... If we know what to expect, we won’t be shocked, we’ll just be pissed,” when Trump uses an emergency to tell us to stay in our homes.

Step 2. Get out of your home and defy the bans. After a horrifying bombing in Madrid, “prime minister, Jose Maria Aznar, falsely pointed the finger at Basque Separatists, and also used the attacks to justify his decision to send troops to Iraq. His rhetoric was classic shock doctrine – division, war, fear.” Spaniards got out of their homes, protested loudly and voted Aznar out of office a few days later. Some said Aznar’s actions reminded them of former Spanish dictator Francisco Franco. ¹

Step 3. Know your history. “After the Pearl Harbor attacks, around 120,000 Japanese-Americans were jailed in internment camps.” Remember that a relatively minor encounter with the North Vietnamese in the Gulf of Tonkin was sold to the American people as the reason why we had to engage in an undeclared but full-out war in Vietnam that spanned 20 years and killed over 1 million people.

Step 4. Always follow the money. “It’s in those moments when fear and chaos are sucking up all the oxygen when we most have to ask ‘whose interests are being served by the chaos?’ ‘What is being slipped through while we’re distracted? Who’s getting richer, and who’s getting even poorer?’” Klein uses the example of what the governor of Louisiana did when the flood waters of Katrina first started to rise: he fired all the teachers. Admittedly, New Orleans’ old public school system was rife with corruption and failing its students. Today, 90% of New Orleans students attend charter schools, but many are still being failed because they aren’t good enough students to make charter schools look good.

Step 5. Advance a bold counter-plan. “At their best, all the previous steps can only slow down attempts to exploit crisis. If we actually want to defeat this tactic, opponents of the shock doctrine need to move quickly to put forward a credible alternate plan. It needs to get at the root of why these sorts of crises are hitting us with ever greater frequency. And that means we have to talk about militarism, climate change, and deregulated markets. ... We need to advance and fight for different models, ones grounded in racial, economic, and gender justice, ones that hold out the credible promise of a tangibly better and fairer life in the here and now and a safer planet for all of us in the long term. Saying no to the shock doctrine is vitally important, but when the shit hits the fan, no is not enough.”

Klein argues that now is the time to turn the tables and demand what we as progressives really want. In other words, we need to make a “leap.”

As a Canadian, Klein supports Canada's Leap Manifesto ².

The Leap Manifesto identifies climate change as the disaster to which progressives must demand a progressive response. After all, climate change – as demonstrated by hurricanes Katrina, Harvey and Irma – will bring crises that we the people can use to shape what we want, or the 1% will use to get what they want.

The Manifesto sets the goal of moving Canada from an extraction / fossil-fuels-based economy to an economy where by 2050, 100% of electricity comes from renewable sources – all with the goal of curbing the effects of climate change.

Other goals fall into place around that central idea: retraining workers in renewable technology; retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency; investing in high-speed rail and affordable non-carbon public transit; developing local, ecologically-based agriculture; rebuilding decaying public infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events; ending trade deals that interfere with rebuilding local non-carbon economies; and expanding low-carbon sectors of the economy such as teaching, social work, the arts and public-interest media.

It's not enough to get Trump out of office. We cannot keep lurching between centrist administrations that make modest, compromise-based improvements and conservative administrations that undo those improvements and worse. When Trump is out of office (and he will be), we need to have already elected representatives ready to fight for what "we the people" really want.

Klein cited the Portland Just Energy Transition ³, which brings together the racial justice and climate change movements as an example of new ways of thinking about old problems.

So, let's get to work: what do we really want?

* All quotes in the five steps are taken from Klein's video, "How to Resist Trump's Shock Doctrine": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTcELLklap4> (8:54 mins)

Other Sources

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Madrid_train_bombings

² <https://leapmanifesto.org/en/sign-the-manifesto/>

³ <https://350pdx.org/pjet-goes-public>

For an in-depth interview with Naomi Klein, see <http://realchangenews.org/2017/08/16/resistance-doctrine-naomi-klein-tells-us-how-resist-trump-show>