**Tackling climate and nuclear emergencies: feminist-humanitarian reframing and global security activism**

Rebecca Johnson, Acronym Institute

In the influential film "The Age of Stupid",[[1]](#footnote-1) the elderly, white, keeper of the world's archive reflects in 2055 on how humanity ignored all the warning signs and drove itself into extinction. He looks at news clips and interviews from 2008, as arrogant politicians and complacent industrialists keep pursuing the gods of perpetual growth and business as usual. As extreme weather conditions and famine decimate vulnerable countries and create migrations of starving, displaced climate refugees, war and the use of nuclear weapons finish things off.

Not many of the news clips showed women or speakers from the Global South, which is of course significant. The nuclear and climate dangers we face today have their roots in the structures and rapacious attitudes that have long underpinned patriarchal policies and attitudes, intersecting with coercive religiosity, colonialism and slavery (in their past and present forms), accompanied by domestic and sexual violence against women and children. The capitalist drivers of climate destruction and the military-industrial drivers of political power, profit and war are mutually dependent and inextricably linked with the production, deployment and use of nuclear and other inhumane weapons.

Across almost all known human cultures, economic, social and military activities are gendered. Generally, the assumptions and structures of gender intersect with "othering" power relations based on race, class, ethnicity, relative wealth and resources. Of linked relevance is the age/capability nexus, where biological years and physical and intellectual abilities can intersect and either privilege or disempower individuals and groups, depending on societal and cultural assumptions and hierarchies.

The purpose of this lecture, however, is not to rehash theories about gendered violence, capitalism and militarism, but to consider how feminist and humanitarian analyses and actions are reframing the zone of viable strategies to tackle extinction level security problems.

To do this I will focus on three campaigns that I have been personally involved in: Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp opposing cruise missiles in the 1980s; the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and its role in achieving the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW); and the recent nonviolent disruptions that have coalesced under the name of Extinction Rebellion (XR) and are now spreading around the world, demanding urgent recognition of the climate emergency that threatens all life on Earth.

My personal engagement with these three campaigns provides me with direct experience with which to analyse aspects that "outside" researchers may not notice or recognise from their own theoretical and experiential standpoints. On the negative side, this means that my analyses are infused with my own origins and experiences as a white British woman, scientist and campaigner. That doesn't mean that what I say is wrong, but these limitations are important to recognise.[[2]](#footnote-2) Climate destruction and nuclear weapons have already – and will continue to – disproportionately harm the most vulnerable people and species who share this Earth. Though active in their own communities, billions in the Global South remain unheard by Northern dominated media and decision makers.

That means that people like me who are privileged to speak must use our voices responsibly and create greater opportunities for others – especially people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged to speak and act more safely. As learned when I marched for women's rights in the 1970s, the "personal is political" and we have to "speak truth to power".[[3]](#footnote-3) Nearly fifty years later, as I join a new generation of 'extinction rebels' to warn about the climate and environmental emergencies we face, the banners proclaim "Tell the Truth", "Act Now" and "Rebel for Life".

Before looking at the cross-cutting lessons and future challenges, it is useful to provide a brief synopsis of the three campaigns.

**Greenham Common: Halting the US-Soviet nuclear arms race**

The early 1980s were one of the most dangerous periods of the Cold War, with 50,000 nuclear warheads poised and ready for someone to make a mistake. In 1979, NATO decided to deploy a new generation of medium range land-based nuclear missiles in five European countries, starting with with Greenham, about sixty miles west of London.

Under the banner "Women for Life on Earth", a group of 20-30 women and children walked for ten days from Wales, arriving at the US Air Force base Greenham Common on 5 September 1981. Their demand was very modest – just a televised debate with someone from the government about the decision to deploy cruise missiles in Britain, the "dual-track" and so-called "zero option". But the women were ignored. So they chained themselves to the main gates of the US base, evoking the Suffragette campaigns for women to be able to vote. When it started raining, local people brought tents and food. Over days, months and then years, the Women's Peace Camp was established, becoming an inspiration for peace women around the world.

This is not the place to describe the many forms of creative, disruptive nonviolent actions we used, which ranged from dancing on the nuclear weapon silos to occupying the air traffic control tower and disrupting nuclear exercises. On several occasions we blockaded all gates to the base for days and pulled miles of military fences down. With boltcutters we snipped holes in the rows of fencing and used these "doors and windows" to enter the most sensitive parts of the nuclear base. We drove USAF buses and painted cluster bombs, planes and cruise missile launchers with symbolic blood and peace messages that disrupted and delayed their use. One one occasion three of us got into a hangar where cruise missiles were being loaded onto a "transporter erector launcher". I managed to climb into the cab of the launcher and locked myself in while my companions distracted the soldiers. We didn't know if the missiles were armed with warheads or empty, but after a stand-off of a half hour or so I gave myself up, as I was concerned that the armed – and frantic – servicemen would harm my companions.

When these launchers and their convoys of military guards and police vans went onto public roads to "melt into the countryside" (as the military planners phrased these nuclear exercises) all along the route they were monitored, marked with pink porridge and paint, and frequently stopped and boarded by Greenham women and local Cruisewatch citizens. Thousands of evictions, arrests and imprisonments could not kill our spirit and determination to stop the nuclear madness. Singing songs of resistance and empowerment we kept going at Greenham and other bases until Presidents Gorbachev and Reagan saw sense and discussed nuclear disarmament in Reykjavik in 1986. In December 1987 they signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which banned all ground-based medium range nuclear weapons from Europe. It wasn't enough, but it was an important breakthrough.

Greenham was a highly visible element in the complex mixture of politics, pressure and protest that brought about the INF Treaty. Elsewhere, citizens marched in the streets and protested at NATO bases. Scientists and doctors published studies on nuclear winter that helped to convince US and Soviet leaders that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".[[4]](#footnote-4) Millions across Europe and Japan demanded nuclear disarmament, while US citizens coalesced around calls for a "Nuclear Freeze" on the US and Soviet arsenals as a first step to end their deadly arms race.

At the sharp edge of governmental efforts to crush peace movements, hundreds of Greenham women were arrested and imprisoned and the camps were persistently evicted. Despite – or perhaps because – of the conditions we faced, Greenham protests grew into an unusual, creative crucible that challenged and changed prevailing expectations of peace activism and sexual politics. As Greenham inspired and involved more and more women from around the world, we made links to oppose the racism, colonialism and sexual violence that blighted the lives of indigenous people who were so often at the forefront of suffering the militarism and production, testing and practices of nuclear and other inhumane weapons.

As a feminist movement that didn't want to have or depend on leaders, Greenham women insisted on the rights and responsibilities that we all have and must exercise. That was the symbolism of the spiderwebs we wove and painted – mutually reliant connectivity and shared power, some years before the world-wide-web was born.

The initial motivation for walking to Greenham was to halt the US-Soviet nuclear arms race, starting with the new generation of cruise, pershing and SS20 missiles. The Women's Peace Camp – at least during the first decade of effective "Greenham Women are Everywhere" campaigning – was about much more. Living and learning about all aspects of patriarchal power and militarism, Greenham women challenged ourselves and everything else, from received theories of power to patriarchal developments of nonviolence as "passive resistance" and "civil disobedience".

**ICAN – Humanitarian imperatives to ban nuclear weapons**

I'm going to jump three decades now to 2007, as feminists, doctors and humanitarian disarmament campaigners founded ICAN in Australia and developed the humanitarian legal strategy that led to the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). This treaty was the culmination of years of campaigning in which nuclear weapons were reframed as a collective humanitarian problem that requires prohibition and elimination, rather than a national military-defence asset that needs to be limited and managed. While nuclear armed states and most of NATO chose to boycott the negotiations, which were chaired by Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gomez of Costa Rica, more than two-thirds of the UN General Assembly participated. On 7 July 2017, 122 states adopted the treaty text, with one against (Netherlands) and one abstention (Singapore). This was much higher than opponents had expected, but on a par with the UN General Assembly resolutions and sign-on statements at successive review meetings of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) since 2012, which built up progressive support for the nuclear ban treaty as a humanitarian imperative.

ICAN's strategy was rooted in three contributory streams: feminist theories of nonviolent change to disarm the patriarchy; lessons from the Oslo and Ottawa approaches that led to landmines and cluster munitions being banned in 1997 and 2008 respectively; and updated studies about the risks and catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear explosions, including global famine caused by "nuclear winter" climate effects. Through a series of international "humanitarian impact" conferences in Oslo, Nayarit, and Vienna, studies on nuclear risks and consequences, and two UN open-ended working groups from 2013-2016, ICAN showed that nuclear technologies pose threats to our shared security, health and environment and that any intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons would be catastrophic. Over the years since the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entered into force, nations that chose to join as "non-nuclear weapon states" and renounce national nuclear weapons options were marginalized from decision-making, as the non-proliferation regime privileged the interests and behaviour of the five nuclear armed states that dominated NPT decision-making (China, France, Russia, UK and United States) – and, increasingly, the interests and behaviour of the four states that have nuclear arsenals outside the NPT (India, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan).

Unlike the non-proliferation and arms control lobbies, ICAN spent our first decade focussing our priority campaigning towards civil society, parliamentarians and governments in the non-nuclear nations, most of which were in the Global South. Our aim was to demonstrate that nuclear disarmament was not just the prerogative of the nuclear haves – nations without nuclear weapons have essential security interests, rights and responsibilities to protect their populations from nuclear annihilation. The humanitarian framing of nuclear weapons changed the game from arms management, dominated by a club of weapons possessors, to abolition, in which nations and peoples collectively exert their legal and political powers to stigmatise and ban nuclear weapons, thereby creating new legal frameworks to prevent nuclear use and eliminate existing arsenals.

ICAN's work "to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and… its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons" were highlighted when the Nobel Committee awarded our network of over 500 civil society organizations the 2017 Peace Prize, increasing the TPNW's credibility and ICAN's resources to pursue its entry into force and implementation. The TPNW now exists. Through ICAN's Parliamentary Pledge, Cities Appeal for Treaty compliant legislation at municipal levels, and divestment initiatives through "Don't Bank on the Bomb", the Nuclear Ban's fundamental prohibitions and obligations are being progressively embedded in law and policy, even in countries where governments boycotted the negotiations.

**Extinction Rebellion – Act Now to Prevent Climate Catastrophe**

The team of climate activists, scientists and lawyers who founded Extinction Rebellion – abbreviated to XR – knew they had already won the arguments about global heating and climate destruction. From the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, created in 1988, engaging 195 governments and thousands of experts) to the most recent Paris Agreement adopted by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), those who are interested have access to the data-based facts and evidence. The problem is not data but human awareness, understanding and urgency. Politics as usual has for decades combined with business as usual to obstruct the urgent actions that need to be taken for there to be any chance of avoiding climate meltdown and planet-wide species death.

The diminishing band of climate deniers mainly comprise three types: fanatical ideologists of market-based economics and perpetual growth; greedy "stupids" who deliberately ignore and distort the facts so that they can continue to profit from polluting and destroying natural ecosystems; and those who feel vulnerable and anxious about making changes and who want to hold on to familiar comforts and lifestyles. Our "Age of Stupid" is paralysed by inertia, greed, arrogance and fear.

When Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg sparked worldwide youth strikes for the climate by sitting outside her country's parliament instead of going to school she understood the climate dangers. She felt frightened and powerless, but knew she had to do *something*. Like the 1981 start to the Greenham Women's Peace Camp, Greta's school strike was an act of desperation. Neither Greta nor the first Greenham activists had plans for building movements, though that is what grew from their persistent acts of personal rebellion.

By contrast, XR was deliberately strategised to wake up the world – especially decision makers – to the climate emergency that is upon us. "Wake up" and "Act Now" are key slogans on XR protests, along with "Tell the Truth", "Beyond Politics" and "Rebel for Life". XR messaging is not just for governments but for all of us. We have to recognize what we are doing and change how we live our lives in order to:

* tackle the accelerating climate catastrophe;
* reduce and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions;
* change our profligate, polluting use of resources;
* prevent further loss of species that share the Earth with humanity;
* develop a "regenerative culture" that promotes care, mutual responsibility, healthy living, resilience and adaptability.

XR was founded in Britain with the mission of building "an international movement that uses nonviolent civil disobedience to achieve radical change in order to minimise the risk of human extinction and ecological collapse.

Before going public on 31 October 2018 with 1,500 people making their "Declaration of Rebellion" in London's Parliament Square, XR's core group researched the dos and don'ts of movement building and chose its simple and effective logo of an hourglass/timer inside the circle of life. Through much discussion the group refined its messaging and objectives, and developed the major tenets of XR's philosophy and nonviolent practice. Like Greenham and ICAN's early years, XR's objectives are infused with feminist-humanitarian principles, even if these are not explicitly labelled as such.

Since then, XR has spread "from the Solomon Islands to Australia, from Spain to South Africa, the US to India", according to the website. From 15 April 2019, XR actions took place in over 80 cities around the world, as thousands of activists blocked London's Waterloo Bridge, Oxford Circus, Piccadilly Circus, Marble Arch and Parliament Square including Westminster Bridge for over a week. Whatever happens next, the first step – gaining attention and changing the discourse – has been taken.

What, then, are the characteristics that connect these three campaigns? What distinguishes them from civil society campaigns for democracy, human rights and other forms of participatory political change, such as Tienanmen Square in 1989, the 2009-2012 uprisings from Iran's "Green Revolution" to Tunisia's "Arab Spring" and Egypt's "Tahrir Square", and Hong Kong's 2014 "Occupy Central" protests for "real suffrage", transparency, love and peace (dubbed the "Umbrella Movement" by Western journalists)? XR's key slogans provide the most up-to-date example of these feminist-humanitarian challenges and so provide a useful framework for my lecture.

**Wake Up**

In one form or another, all social movements have a "wake up" message about dangers. These may be political dangers such as oppression, fascism, coercive control, religious extremism or war. Don't sleep-walk off the cliff, the protestors warn. Framing nuclear war and climate destruction as existential threats, Greenham women, ICAN and XR go further, warning "Wake up, before it's too late". The messaging is urgent but it characterises inaction as "sleep" rather than wilful stupidity, greed or denial. This makes for a good slogan but not a strategy.

Effecting political change requires an understanding of the obstacles and levers of power. Whether through elections, legislation including treaties, overthrowing political elites, or transforming national and international institutions, movements need implicit or explicit theories of change that start with today's conditions and identify obstacles and objectives. Who has power and how is it wielded? What are the structures and systems that benefit from passive, sleeping publics?

Drawing from history and experience, here is my analysis of change. Some kinds of policy change can be achieved through incremental, linear steps but most can't. Success depends on identifying the change you want and challenges you face, and applying the appropriate strategy to get you to where you want to be (or as close as possible). If change can be achieved piece by piece, then it may be useful to treat the campaign like a 'tug of war' with a length of rope, in which pulling the rope back metre by metre results in "success" – or a "win" however those goals are perceived. But if there is a deep chasm to cross, incremental steps lead to downfall. You have to calculate what acceleration you'd need for a running leap. If feasible, marshal all your resources and energy and take a courageous run at it. If not feasible, find a way round, however steep and inconvenient.

Achieving disarmament change is more like dislodging a massive boulder. It is not a linear process and one big leap is not feasible. Reducing or even eliminating one type of weapon or military practice is not necessarily the first step towards closing down the next. Deep rooted ideologies, backed by powerful interest groups within the military, defence industries and their political beneficiaries have to be weakened and dismantled. To be successful, therefore, civil society must engage at multiple points: political, legal, environmental, diplomatic, humanitarian and moral. Some must dig, while others push and tug. Different types of organisation and approach can accomplish different parts of the process of shifting the paradigm within which certain weapons are viewed as desirable by powerful cliques. A rope tied around an embedded boulder may not be seen to move for a long time, even though the digging, pushing and tugging is loosening everything that holds it in place. Once the boulder begins to shift however, gravity and momentum can unravel far more of the rope's length far more quickly than is possible by playing it out metre by metre.

When social change initiatives challenge status quo attitudes that are deeply embedded and reinforced by military-industrial interests, patriarchal gender and power relations or similarly deep-rooted establishments, then sustainable change requires transformational objectives and strategies. Many actors and actions are needed but recognise that some may not be helpful. For example, who has chosen to atop the boulder? Who are busy pushing more stones and earth into cracks exposed by the diggers and tuggers? Look closely and you may see that these resemble political actors (civil society as well as governmental) that are good at positioning themselves for personal power and self aggrandisement. Intentionally or not, these play into the hands of boulder-loving governments and others with vested interests.

Beware of funders and power structures that neutralise civil society challenges by promoting as 'realistic' only the incremental steps that are easy for governments to co-opt, water down and claim credit for. Be wary of NGOs that are desperate for money and mainstream credibility, as they are easy for social change opponents to channel towards unproductive 'make work' that either serves as time-consuming distractions or, worse still, can be manipulated to derail more challenging initiatives and play into establishment hands. And be alert to vested interests that ridicule the strategies and actions they fear might actually succeed in bringing about substantive change. History has shown that the more efforts that vested interests put into trying to get others to ignore, ridicule, marginalise, patronise or dismiss certain initiatives, the more seriously we should take those who are working to achieve them.

**Act Now**

What do campaigners mean when they say "act now"? Actions aren't useful if they are just a reaction to crisis or a response to the feeling that we have to *do something.* Effective actions bring us closer to our objectives, whether to achieve behavioural or legislative change, legal treaties, political agreements, cultural transformation, awareness raising so that others will act, or some other purpose. Effective actions need to be consistent with our principles and objectives. Violence provides a way of silencing and eliminating opposition, but is seldom if ever effective for constructive, sustainable change. In general, violence begets violence, as offensive and defensive actions and reactions spiral into militarism, terror, arms racing and war. Conflict, by contrast, is not the main problem, though attempts are often made by people with status quo interests to prevent, manage, suppress and silence conflict. Conflict is, in reality, a component and driver of change, just as risk can be a component and driver of opportunities to become more secure.

The three examples of Greenham, ICAN and XR explicitly make nonviolence a non-negotiable principle for action in their names, but what they mean by "nonviolent action" should not be assumed to be the same in all cases. Is nonviolence the same as civil disobedience or passive resistance, terms which were traditionally used as if they were interchangeable?

Greenham women tried at first to fit in with the prevailing (patriarchal) concepts of how to "do nonviolence", but we came to reject the pressures from traditional pacifists and peaceniks that criticised and tried to control our behaviour based on their versions of non-violence (with a hyphen). We were told to emulate past moral and religious leaders like Mahatma Gandhi or Jesus Christ and "turn the other cheek" when police or soldiers behaved violently. We were pressured to suppress our fear and rage. Typical nonviolent actions in Britain involved sitting or lying down to demonstrate our "passive resistance". But the experience of male violence in many women's lives meant that passivity is a feminist problem and so cannot work as a solution. Some men may need to learn to be passive instead of reacting with gender-framed violence. Some men also enjoy women being passive or frozen in fear. It is unsurprising, then, that many women feel disempowered and unsafe when required to behave passively in the face of patriarchal violence. To act safely and nonviolently we have to be able to exercise choice and communicate with the agents of authority. To be truly nonviolent we need to feel powerful and empowered.

Like "conflict", power is generally associated with violence and the tools of violence. That is because patriarchy's versions of power are attributive power, coercive power, and "power over" others (including Nature). Feminists, by contrast, conceive of power as "power of", integrative power, the power to connect and to *do*, the web metaphor used at Greenham and evoked more recently by XR.

Through our discussions as we practised our feminist peace activism in the face of considerable levels of violence used against us, Greenham women developed a different practice from "passive" that we called "feminist nonviolence". Many of us then brought the philosophy, practice and tactics of feminist nonviolence into the rest of our lives, as the Women's Peace Camp developed outward into "Greenham Women Everywhere", starting with "Women's International Day for Disarmament and Peace", which is still celebrated on 24 May around the world. Greenham's active nonviolence was taken up by movements such as Women in Black, where women on all sides of the break-up of Yugoslavia opposed militarism and war with active resistance under banners proclaiming "always disobedient", as they gave practical support to women subjected to sexual violence and rape. For Balkan and other European activists, the Greenham song "We are the witches who will never be burned" has particular resonance.

Men can practise feminist nonviolence too. Though developed at Greenham, it is not biologically determined. Feminism is a political challenge to the patriarchy, which men have to challenge and reject too, in order to achieve peace, justice and environmental sustainability. That means we all need to acknowledge our feelings, including fear and anger. These are like grief (mentioned by XR in relation to the loss of precious species, habitats, ecosystems, climate stability and weather patterns), as well as love and care. They are powerful emotions that can either paralyse us or motivate us to resist violence, abuse and oppression. In using feminist nonviolence we find ways to channel our emotions to confront and challenge the weapons, militaries and governments. Not by fighting violence with violence, but with our active selves and consciences, offering constructive alternatives. When we put our bodies in front of nuclear weapon launchers or occupied the military facilities we did so with a sense of responsibility, personal and political. I witnessed these again in the XR protests this year. On the XR website, you will find this explanation: "We promote civil disobedience and rebellion because we think it is necessary - we are asking people to find their courage and to collectively do what is necessary to bring about change." While I question how XR seems to equate nonviolence and civil disobedience, now is not the time for that discussion.

Greenham developed feminist nonviolence as a philosophy and practice to meet women's needs, but it is clear from XR principles and experience that it also meets the needs of today's generation of male activists. Instead of passive, we choose to be strong and empowered, active and assertive when confronted by people who wield abusive power. We are not afraid of conflict and confrontation, but we choose not to harm living beings, including those who use coercion and violence against us. We engage with politics and the law, but on our terms, not theirs.

ICAN developed out of various strands of peace and anti-nuclear movements but was established as a single-issue organisation and network with the specific legal and diplomatic objective of a nuclear ban treaty. In its founding, ICAN drew many elements from the feminist-humanitarian approaches of Greenham and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) as well as the more patriarchal International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW). For various reasons ICAN is developing along more linear, hierarchical tracks. Though some ICAN partners consider nonviolence to be a philosophical underpinning of the humanitarian approach (akin to ethical or religious beliefs for others), there is a prevalent view in ICAN that nonviolence is a useful strategy and tactic.

It is early days yet for XR, but as described in talks and on its website it can be deduced that XR's principles and philosophy are closer to Greenham than ICAN. XR is more strategic than Greenham, which developed organically, eschewing leadership structures and preferring the freedom and responsibility of a Kropotkin form of anarchism, though that was never explicitly endorsed. At times Greenham suffered from the "tyranny of structurelessness" identified by American feminist Jo Freeman in 1970, who noted that this "apparent lack of structure too often disguised an informal, unacknowledged and unaccountable leadership that was all the more pernicious because its very existence was denied". By contrast, XR applauds ideas such as "Momentum-driven organising" and developing strategies based on studies that suggest that "mobilising 3.5% of the population [can] achieve system change".

Much more could be said about the "Act Now" urgency and the spectrum of actions that can be characterised as nonviolent. The important point is to recognise that nonviolence is on a spectrum that encompasses a philosophy of life and change, a set of principles and practices, and an active tactical choice in the campaign toolbox, that might be chosen or discarded as appropriate for particular objectives or circumstances.

**Beyond Politics**

Resisting nuclear and climate extinction are profoundly political acts, but what XR conveys in this slogan is generally taken to mean that they are beyond party politics and divisions of "left" and "right". XR talks about setting its "mission on what is necessary" and emphasises the importance of autonomy and decentralisation. Like Greenham, XR's structure is likened to a web rather than a hierarchical structure or pyramid: "We organise in small groups. These groups are connected in a complex web that is constantly evolving as we grow and learn. We are working to build a movement that is participatory, decentralised, and inclusive."

Questions of power structures, decision making and control need to be addressed, and the examples I've chosen for this lecture make different choices about these, which can be analysed further if wanted.

**Rebel for Life**

In English, this slogan has a double meaning depending on where emphasis is placed in the work "rebel". This can be an exhortation to rebel and a personal identity (to *be* a rebel). "For life" is purpose, objective and urgent necessity when faced with potential nuclear and climate catastrophe. Greenham, ICAN and XR are in their different ways all movements of protest and resistance for life and human security. Greenham women marched under the banner "Women for Life on Earth". ICAN reframed nuclear weapons use as violating international humanitarian law and endangering life with nuclear war, the ultimate humanitarian catastrophe. XR talks of "creating a world that is fit for generations to come".

**Regenerative Culture**

Regenerative culture has been a buzzword in academic and ecological circles for a while, but is being foregrounded by XR as a campaign objective. Calling on activists to openly challenge ourselves and our toxic system and leave our comfort zones to take action for change, XR highlights the importance of creating a regenerative culture which is "healthy, resilient and adaptable". XR also emphasises the value of reflecting and learning, from other movements and contexts as well as our own experiences, recognising this as essential for planning and effective, sustainable change. Like Greenham, XR seeks to "welcome everyone and every part of everyone" by working actively "to create safer and more accessible spaces" and "breaking down hierarchies of power for more equitable participation".

**Conclusions?**

I won't draw conclusions at this stage because this needs to be an open, ongoing conversation. I still have many questions. What are you questions? What fears and objectives come when you think about these issues? Where do we need to go with this conversation... and our shared world?

1. The Age of Stupid was conceived and directed by Franny Armstrong in 2008-9, with Pete Postlethwaite as the 2055 archivist. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Age_of_Stupid> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. On the strengths and dilemmas of participant-research see Sasha Roseneil, Disarming Patriarchy, Feminism and Political Action at Greenham, Open University Press, 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See "Speak Truth to Power: A Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence", published by the American Friends Service Committee in 1955; this phrase is now attributed to a letter written in 1942 by the Gay African American writer Bayard Rustin whose contribution was redacted from that book when he was arrested for being homosexual. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This argument was used in different versions by many anti-nuclear campaigners, but has come to be attributed to US President Ronald Reagan, who in his 1984 State of the Union Address said, " A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. The only value in our two nations possessing nuclear weapons is to make sure they will never be used. But then would it not be better to do away with them entirely?" [↑](#footnote-ref-4)