

Summary

A step-by-step program to defeat Trumpism, heal division, escape despair and remake the foundation of a just society in 18 months—all while maximizing the impact of your limited time.

Fifty Freedoms White Paper

The world feels like it's collapsing from eleven million directions at once. But it's not inevitable. We can set the stage for a different, beautiful future—and we can do it in just 18 months.

A strong majority of humans agree about many basic dimensions of what we want a beautiful future to look like; and, perhaps contrary to our felt experience, world history shows that when a surprisingly small fraction of a population acts together in a sustained, coordinated, non-violent fashion, that group is able to win substantial, regime-change-level victories favored by the majority.

The special sauce is practicing *mass collaboration* with others like us who want the same things—acting in three major synchronized ways that can change politics, business, and culture: (1) elect people who also want that future and support/pressure them to deliver it; (2) mass boycott of the world's biggest brands until they align with that future, too; (3) collective lifestyle and personal changes.

Where our confidence comes from

A few years back, a war studies professor named Erica Chenoweth got invited to a peace studies conference and said non-violence is all well and good but sometimes you just need guns and ammo. A fellow scientist approached and said, if you're so confident, show me the data. They agreed to look for it together. They reviewed 100 years of resistance movements in all corners of the world, in democracies and dictatorships. Here's [what they found](#): peaceful resistance was twice as effective as armed aggression in achieving movement goals and ten times as likely to lead to democratic outcomes; and the strategic advantage of civil resistance holds across all continents, regardless of the level of repression used against it.

Equally inspiring, in their review of 323 campaigns from 1900 to 2006, taking the form of protests, boycotts, civil disobedience, flagpole climbing and other forms of nonviolent noncooperation, they found that **in every single case where the movement mobilized a certain portion of the populace, the movement succeeded**: in toppling dictators, throwing out occupying armies, major regime-change level victories. How big do you think that certain portion of the population was? Three quarters? A little more than half? Could it work with just a quarter of the population? The answer is 3.5%. That's all it took in all those successful movements. How many Americans is 3.5 percent? It's about 12 million. Let's put that in a little perspective with some data about how many people might be willing to mobilize:

- **60 million American workers—almost a third of the labor force—still earn less than \$15/hr**, and more than half of American workers don't earn a living wage
- 87 million Americans are “alarmed” about the climate emergency, 91 million more are “concerned,” and **82 million say they're willing to**

"Join a campaign to convince elected officials to do the right thing about global warming"

- 100 million voters in a recent presidential election were concerned that their votes didn't matter as much as they might have because of too much money in politics
- 192 million Americans think it's the government's responsibility to make sure everyone has healthcare
- **At least 232 million Americans, that's 69% of us, believe abortion should generally be legal**
- 242 million Americans—72 percent of us—understand “why Black Americans do not trust the police,” and 59 percent say police are too violent when dealing with people suspected of crimes
- **282 million Americans—basically almost all of us—** support universal background check for gun sales

Ok, so we know we only need 12 million people to build a three-pronged movement (election/boycott/lifestyle+culture) powerful enough to win a non-violent cultural political renaissance in this country. And we know that **more than ten times that many share a vision of a better future**. But, you might reasonably ask, just because that many people share hopes, does that mean they'd be willing to do anything about it?

Yes. Ninety-seven million Americans say they would “definitely or probably” engage in a campaign to convince officials to take action on climate and **50 million say they would personally engage in non-violent civil disobedience**.

And that's just for a single issue.

So, what are we all waiting for?

Our interviews and research reveals that a large swath of Americans have a desire and willingness to do “almost anything” to help create this future—*if they think the effort will work*. Thinking it will work is based on (1)

something psychologists call “efficacy beliefs” and (2) having a credible plan. Efficacy beliefs are strengthened when people you respect or identify with are participating, too (we’ll talk about that part below). A plan feels credible when it’s based on historical examples, and when there’s a felt sense that lots of people will participate, which leads us to...

A new tool for reaching critical mass

We’ve been testing an “I will if a whole bunch of other people will” tool that allows each of us to conditionally commit to take action if and only if a truly critical mass of like minded folks also commit. The tool will allow us to achieve mass collaboration in the three circles of Fifty Freedoms: political, corporate and lifestyle. “I will if y’all will” enables us to use “collective bargaining” for everything. Yes, for good jobs making cars and writing screenplays, but also for generationally significant new policies in our towns, states, country and even between countries. Many times, we don’t even need 3.5% of the population to force substantial change in corporate or government behavior or just get the ball rolling towards larger participation. Sometimes just 15 people showing up at a city council meeting can make all the difference when just you by yourself wouldn’t. A conditional commitment can help you know you won’t be showing up alone.

Ready to conditionally commit? Check out this (also draft) [survey of twenty of the most important things we can do together](#) to change the course of the future. Which would you be willing to do with a critical mass of others?

The Fifty Freedoms Platform: a beautiful future most of us want

We wanted to begin constructing a policy platform that would be the most exciting to the most people. First, we asked, **what are the issues that are most important to young people in this country?** And second, within those issues, **what specific policies have the broadest support?** And finally, among those that are the most important and have the most support,

which are the juiciest, most exciting, most likely to feel like they'll upgrade my life immediately?

By answering those questions, Fifty Freedoms emerged. It's a draft of a 50-plank policy program—encompassing the ten broad issues that 18-30 year-old Americans identify as the most important—policies which generally garner support among 60-80% of the *entire population*.

While not even every ally is going to love every single thing in it, and **passing it into law will certainly not solve every critical problem we face**, it can unite the vast majority of us who agree with *most* of the things in it, and it will sharply **correct our current course to create the foundation for further democratic reforms and an upward spiral in the most important areas of American society**.

Here are some example Freedoms:

- Pass a law to protect the right to access abortion care throughout the United States
- Decrease utility costs and transition the grid to 100% renewable energy by 2030
- End partisan gerrymandering and remove dark money from campaigns
- Protect and strengthen the right to join a union and bargain collectively
- Codify same-sex marriage as the law of the land
- Universal background checks on gun purchases
- Implement alternative to prison for non-violent crimes and eliminate mandatory minimums
- A Seven Generations New Deal that charts a new course in caring for Indigenous Americans
- Medicare for All, including dental and vision
- Make public universities, colleges and trade schools free
- Build enough new nonprofit homes to ensure every American has a place to live

- \$17/hr national minimum wage
- Cut inflation by eliminating the 60% of it caused by monopoly profits of giant corporations
- Give a gasoline rebate to all Americans paid for with a windfall profits tax on big oil
- Create an earned path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children
- Legalize marijuana nationwide for adults

Read more about this draft version of the Fifty Freedoms Platform and help shape what's in it [here](#).

Crew, a salve for separation: Do it with your friends

The Internet and modern life itself have made the world lonelier for most of us—indeed, we're in the midst of a global loneliness crisis. But, it doesn't have to keep getting more solitary with each new piece of stay-at-home tech. We can model a less lonely, more joyful world at the very same time that we bring it into being. In that spirit, the base unit of effort and participation in the Fifty Freedoms Movement are small groups of friends. These small teams of people you already know (we call them "Crews") provide support, camaraderie, joy, accountability, learning possibilities and *human connection* that make the needed work much more engaging and likely to succeed.

In our early work testing out different concepts for how to gather and organize crews, we've found the so-called work to feel a lot like play. We've chosen to invite people that we have a longing to spend more time with into our crews. This makes them win-wins. We win if we succeed in our grand efforts, but we also win just by coming together more regularly with important people in our lives.

We have imagined at least two kinds of crews: one organized locally with friends you can meet up with to share food and tackle local issues; and another that's more Zoom-y, with friends around the country or world with whom you can gather on video or chat and work on more national issues, as well as group lifestyle changes.

Crews are trained for impact and semi-autonomous

- **Trained:** a core purpose of the Fifty Freedoms project is to train twelve million new participants in democracy, organizing, civic action, personal empowerment and consciousness raising—using the best techniques and learnings from the most successful social change campaigns of the past several decades. This will usher in a new era of transformative public participation with ripples far beyond Fifty Freedoms.
- **Autonomous:** Crews' foremost commitment is to their teammates. Your Crew will be free and encouraged to act independently from Fifty Freedoms. The Crew manual will give suggestions and guidance. Activities might look like:
 - helping a local organization or campaign
 - one of you running for local office
 - ganging up with other local Crews to have an outsized impact at a public meeting
 - committing to some lifestyle changes
 - or literally almost anything else that builds cohesion, solidarity, a little piece of the world you want, or is just fun to do in a group
- **Synchronized at scale:** our broad power will also derive directly from our ability to do certain things in great numbers, often at the same time. Fifty Freedoms and partner organizations will highlight certain critical mass actions with the hope that all Crews will participate. Some of these will be based on reaching a critical mass of prior commitments to act, while others will arise in real time. Actions will be designed to have a high likelihood of success based on expected participation: **Fifty Freedoms organizers will not ask people to do things that have little chance of having an impact.**

The Three Circles of Fifty Freedoms

Circle 1: Mass Collaboration in Electing and Pressuring

To pass the Fifty Freedoms platform at all levels of government, we need to elect candidates who either support it or can be pushed to support it, and then we need to push. **The policy agenda is designed to generate genuine enthusiasm among young people who are unenthusiastic about the presidential candidates and might otherwise choose the couch in the 2024 election.**

Because the preponderance of young people favor progressive policy ideas, a turnout wave of young voters would be more than

Non partisan but not dumb

We recognize that the two-party system has failed us in so many ways and that both parties bear responsibility. We also recognize that the GOP has been taken over by would-be authoritarians and White Nationalists who fundamentally don't care about the Constitution or the survival of democracy. They want something very different from what the vast majority of us (certainly Democrats and Independents and even half of Republicans) want and are hell-bent on blocking almost everything else.*

We also know that several states have recently passed very ambitious climate legislation and sweeping policies meant to benefit the working class and our collective freedom. What do they all have in common? Controlled by Democrats. **Fifty Freedoms isn't about Harris or not-Harris. It's about electing people who can be vehicles for achieving our policy goals.** We think Kamala Harris likely supports our goals and will champion them in any case with the help of our pressure.

* "It was, in my view, literally right in our grasp," Senator Wyden said. "When I talked to my Republican colleagues, and I said, 'Do you have any problem with a market-oriented, technology-neutral system that wouldn't pick winners and losers and would have competition?' They would all look at their shoes and say, 'No.'" Wyden said he also asked them to contribute ideas for cutting carbon, and assured them he would work to include them in the bill. "I think that a lot of them wanted to work on this issue," he said. But in Wyden's view, they wouldn't cross the line in the sand drawn by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), who was **determined for the GOP to stick together in opposition to any Democratic climate plan.**

sufficient to take control of the presidency (barring spoilers, see below), congress, and state legislatures, city councils, school boards, etc, with candidates who either already favor or can be pushed by people power to favor Fifty Freedoms. Throughout the primaries and general election of 2024, our movement will work collectively to find and endorse candidates who themselves endorse Fifty Freedoms, or where appropriate, localized versions of it.

As with all activities, Crews will be the locus of activity in collaborating at scale to elect these candidates. Each crew member will adopt ten new voters, holding their hands throughout the cycle to register and vote. **Our goal is to empower three thousand such members per congressional district, generating thirty thousand new votes per district.** This will lead not only to a landslide in the Electoral College, but a 238-197 advantage in the House, a 53-47 Senate, enough state trifectas to pass [National Popular Vote](#) and thousands of victories further down the ballot.

This will lead not only to a landslide in the Electoral College, but a 238-197 advantage in the House, a 53-47 Senate, enough state trifectas to pass [National Popular Vote](#) and tens of thousands of victories further down the ballot.

Some Crews will even submit their own candidates for local office. Other Crews will create or support local Fifty Freedoms Voter Guides—cheat sheets that help all values-aligned voters know which boxes to check, including the 8 million infrequent voters who don't vote because they don't know whom to vote for, but also reliable voters who don't have the time to thoroughly research every down-ballot race.

Local voter guides and the Crews that write them will be helping down-ballot candidates with not only votes, but also publicity, volunteers, and funding. In turn, those down-ballot candidates' endorsement of Fifty

Freedoms and the Voter Guide will create positive feedback to grow attention to both. Enthusiasm for local candidates can actually act as a lever to bring in new voters who might be uninspired by up ballot races but willing to pull a lever for Fifty Freedoms-aligned candidates once they're in the booth.

Crews that create guides gain agency and engagement in local politics, which sets them up for pressuring the people they've helped elect beginning in January of 2025.

Circle 2: Mass Boycott and Corporate Pressure

Why are we targeting corporations? Big corporations are responsible for most pollution on Earth, and people know that. And for decades they've been a key part of the machine that controls not just who gets elected, but who can even be viable candidates; not just what policies get passed into law, but what policies are even considered "reasonable." And throughout those decades, they've supported politicians and policies that have abused workers, exacerbated inequality and poisoned our communities and the planet. They've done this while pretending to do otherwise, because if there's one thing they're really good at, it's telling a story. In that story, they are local heroes, champions of the environment, allies to workers. But we know better.

[Princeton research citation](#)

Big corporations get what they want

Princeton researchers recently looked at twenty years of history to answer a simple question: Does the government represent the people? They compared data from 2000 public opinion surveys to policies that became law, that is, they compared what people wanted to what the government actually did. They concluded: "**Economic elites and organized business interests have substantial independent impact on US policies, while average citizens... have little or no independent influence.**" In their analysis, regular citizens got the policies they wanted 3% of the time, whereas businesses and the elites who control them got what they wanted up to 76% of the time.

Because powerful, multinational corporations are extremely skillful at getting what they want politically, and most of them are also extremely susceptible to sustained pressure campaigns from their customers, we have a very unique opportunity: Through mass collaboration, we, their customers, can pressure them to demand the policies we want—especially when those policies are not existentially threatening to their business. Thus, the second circle of Fifty Freedoms is exactly that, acting together at scale to embarrass and boycott brands to pressure them to clean up all their messes, and put their power to work helping build the new future.

We will begin by pressuring them specifically around the climate emergency. We created a public-friendly [scorecard](#) [in pre-release] (user: unite pw: theworld) that assembles the work of dozens of organizations in one place to track how brands are doing across not just the areas that they brag about, but also the ones that they prefer to hide, such as their giving to candidates who are climate change and election deniers, their abuse of workers and their participation in trade groups that continuously lobby to subvert the will of regular people. We will use the scorecard to daylight their commitment to our demands, and apply escalating pressure to the laggards with the goal of getting the vast majority of the world's biggest brands to come aboard by 2025.

Circle 3: Mass Collaboration in Lifestyle Shift and Culture Change

You may have heard that in terms of fixing what's wrong in the world, individual lifestyle choices don't really matter— that personal action is insignificant compared to government and corporate behavior. But that view leaves out several critical considerations: the reality of demand and supply, the potential of collective action, the ways cultures shift, and the personal benefits of shifts.

First, although it's true that just several dozen companies [are responsible for more than half of global carbon emissions](#), those companies are making

things that we all use. A recent [study](#) summarizes that household consumption “contributes to more than 60% of global emissions and between 50% and 80% of total land, material, and water use.” The richest 40 million humans emit more than the poorest 4 billion do—i.e. they are [100x more polluting](#); nevermind the richest, even a typical American’s yearly carbon emissions are [five times](#) that of the world’s *average* person. Simply put, our lifestyles and choices mathematically matter.

And when millions of us act together, that math changes dramatically and culture does, too. To give one example, when 12 million people ride their bike instead of driving to work, that’s 12 million fewer cars on the road, which is like shutting down several coal plants. It also improves local air and makes streets safer and more pleasant for everyone. And, critically, it puts 12 million more bikes on the road that will be visible to tens of millions of other people who might just get bike curious themselves, leading to a virtuous feedback that creates more riders, [safer conditions for everyone](#) and more demand for better cycling infrastructure, which in turn draws in a new wave of riders and waters the seeds of a cultural renaissance.

Now imagine the impacts of 12 million of us putting solar panels on our roofs and switching banks and eating more veggies and buying less stuff. Imagine how it would affect our communities and our own health and happiness. Although there may be some absolute sacrifices required for reducing our impacts, so many of the things we could do for the well being of the planet would also help heal our souls and bodies while making us saner humans, better parents, and more joyful neighbors.

We’ve been presented with a false choice between government, corporate and individual responsibility. Each is possible and all are necessary venues for our collective intervention. Some of the change that the world needs can’t be instituted by government fiat—either because it’s just not practical or because it would generate extreme resistance (“Those bastards want to take away our hot dogs!!!”). It instead needs to come from voluntary shifts that change both individual lives and cultural norms which themselves drive more individual change. Working together, en masse, we can propagate a

cultural shift that imbues each of us with the belief that a more beautiful world is possible and that it's within our power and responsibility to bring into being.

How we spread

Most of the time, mass movements are sparked by a trigger event—a highly publicized incident that dramatically reveals a critical social problem to the public in a vivid way—think George Floyd’s murder or protesters setting up tents in front of Wall Street. **While such events ignite a tremendous amount of energy, that energy is often hard to channel into a disciplined mass movement** that achieves concrete societal victories. Trigger events are also very difficult to conjure.

The passing of the torch from Joe Biden to Kamala Harris has generated an extremely rare and supercharged political moment with venue-busting enthusiasm and through-the-roof willingness to be engaged. There’s an immense amount of *potential* energy, and we must harness it—both for the election and for the work that follows. Traditionally, following the election of a Democrat, progressive activism takes a nosedive: many people are happy to think the work is done and go back to their routines. When that happens, the usual suspects—the wealthy and corporate voices—become the biggest influences on policy. We can’t let that happen this time.

We’ll rely on three forms of friend-to-friend recruitment to grow our ranks. In addition to the simple arithmetic of folks inviting their friends to their Crews, we’ll also use a proven strategy for reaching new people further out from our close silos.

Learning from successful past movements, such as the Obama campaign of 2008, we have begun testing virtual mini house parties, aka “*Freedom Calls*.” These short (~30 minute), high-energy daily Zooms feature live music, a short intro to Fifty Freedoms and the opportunity at our fingers, three high leverage actions that we can take right now—*on the call*—that make us bonafide contributors, and a closing ask to invite ten friends to the next one tomorrow.

Similarly, *Freedom Chats for Kamala* are group chats on WhatsApp or other platforms that allow dozens or even hundreds of friends to engage about the election, sharing fun memes and volunteer strategy and encouragement to get on a Call.

By inviting a few friends from different demographics and perspectives—who then go on to invite their own friends—we can quickly reach out of our own silos and expand to include all flavors of people.

Let's get Antipocalyptic together

While we are not sure about everything, we are sure that the way that we've been doing things up until now is not working for many, many, many, many, many humans on this planet, and it is not working for this planet itself, which is in the process of devouring us and vice versa. **We are sure that we have the power to turn the whole ship around. We are sure that it can be done quickly, and that in fact, it likely has the highest chance of success if done quickly.** We are sure that most of us want the same things and that we can actually get them through mass collaboration.

So, let this be a call to arms/pens/keyboards/wallets/feet of all who want to avert apocalypse and chart a new course. Let it begin the swan song of the poly-crisis and the beginning of a new era of flourishing democracy. Let it be the moment when we gather in person, online and in spirit with a critical mass of our fellow humans in 2024 to:

- **Vote in candidates who already are or can be pressured to be allies**
- **Boycott and pressure big companies to change course**

- **Change our own lifestyles and selves in line with our values and vision**

And then in 2025, let us use our rediscovered power to pressure governments of all sizes worldwide to mount a full scale planetary effort to remake the world.

ChatGPT's summary

The document outlines an 18-month plan for a political, consumer, and cultural renaissance aimed at achieving mass collaboration to bring about significant changes in politics, business, and culture. The goal is to pass a comprehensive policy agenda called "Fifty Freedoms," addressing shared prosperity and environmental sustainability.

Key Points:

1. **Mass Collaboration:** The plan emphasizes the power of mass collaboration in three major ways: electing supportive candidates, boycotting major brands, and making collective lifestyle and buying changes.
2. **Historical Data:** The document references studies, particularly one by Erica Chenoweth, highlighting the effectiveness of peaceful resistance and civil movements in achieving substantial victories for societal change.
3. **Critical Mass:** The concept of critical mass is introduced, suggesting that only 3.5% of the population (approximately 12 million Americans) actively participating in a movement can lead to significant change.

4. **Policy Platform:** A draft of a 50-plank policy program called "Fifty Freedoms" is presented. It covers various issues, including climate action, workers' rights, healthcare, education, criminal justice reform, and more.
5. **Conditional Commitment Tool:** A tool for conditional commitments is introduced, allowing individuals to commit to taking action if a critical mass of like-minded individuals also commits. This tool aims to facilitate collective bargaining for various initiatives.
6. **Three Circles of Fifty Freedoms:**
 - a. Circle 1 - Political: Focuses on mass collaboration in electing and pressuring candidates who support Fifty Freedoms.
 - b. Circle 2 - Corporate: Involves a mass boycott and corporate pressure campaign targeting major brands to adopt climate-friendly policies.
 - c. Circle 3 - Lifestyle and Culture: Advocates for mass collaboration in lifestyle shifts and cultural change to address environmental concerns and promote well-being.
7. **Small Groups (Crews):** Emphasizes the importance of small groups of friends (Crews) as the base unit of effort for collaboration, providing support, camaraderie, and accountability.
8. **Calls for collective action in 2024,** involving voting in supportive candidates, boycotting and pressuring corporations, and making lifestyle changes. The aim is to pressure governments globally in 2025 for comprehensive change.

The document encourages readers to participate in shaping the policy platform and to consider joining the movement for positive societal transformation.