

Introduction

Careening toward Extinction

The fight for equality must be fought on many fronts—in the urban slums, in the sweat shops of the factories and fields. Our separate struggles are really one—a struggle for freedom, for dignity and for humanity.

This passage of a telegram from Martin Luther King Jr. to César Chávez from September 22, 1966, offers an important lesson for today's activists, as struggles for justice are becoming increasingly global. It is one of the first articulations of what can be called an anthropological imagination.

Every day it seems another crisis is coming to light, each more urgent than the next. It is easy to feel overwhelmed. Within a generation, getting news went from having daily broadcasts and newspapers to being subjected to a literally constant barrage of information. The “news cycle” is rapidly losing its meaning. In addition to several twenty-four-hour news stations with constantly scrolling headlines, news websites now employ clickbait, sensationalized content to entice readers to click on a link to a particular website, sponsored by paid advertisers. Social media platforms track—and predict—our every move, eerily foretold by the movie *Minority Report*. How can one possibly keep track of what’s actually going on or tease apart fact from “fake news” or “alternative facts”?

The year 2017 was marked by catastrophe. Within the span of a single month, three consecutive hurricanes battered the Caribbean and the U.S. South. The people most impacted were poor, immigrant, elderly, people of color, or those living in poorer nations or colonies.

People in the frontline communities of Houston are now paying for the damage to their city caused by the fossil fuel industry headquartered a few miles away that benefited from easy-money deregulation only days before Hurricane Harvey, category 4, hovered over the area beginning on August 26. Not two weeks later, Hurricane Irma, category 5, slammed through the Virgin Islands and Dominica before ripping along the northern coast of Cuba and heading north to Florida and Georgia. On September 20, Hurricane Maria, also a category 5 storm, devastated Puerto Rico. Many of the island’s 3.4 million residents were without power and water for months. The United States played politics with the death toll: while the federal government initially counted 64 dead,¹ Puerto Rico’s governor Ricardo Rosselló belatedly accepted a figure almost fifty times greater, 2,975. Maria was the worst hurricane to hit Puerto Rico in eighty-nine years. The science connecting climate change to the increasing destructiveness and longevity of hurricanes has been clear for quite some time, even as the U.S. administration seems hell bent on a policy of denial.

At the same time, not since the 1960s civil rights era have white supremacists been so active, openly marching and committing acts of violence and aggression in Charlottesville and other cities across the South. On August 12, 2017, white nationalists gathered near the University of Virginia to protest the removal of a Robert E. Lee statue, chanting, “You will not replace us” and “Go back to Africa.” Many present referred to Dylann Roof—a young white man who murdered nine Black worshippers at a Charleston church

two years earlier—as a national hero. Another white nationalist rammed his car into a crowd of counterprotestors, sending several to the hospital and killing one, thirty-two-year-old Heather Heyer. Rather than condemning the violence, President Trump equivocated, blaming “both sides” while calling Black athletes like Colin Kaepernick a “son of a bitch” and attempting to bully the NFL to fire individuals for exercising their First Amendment rights to free speech. This mobilization of hate was repeated in October when three white supremacists from Texas opened fire following white nationalist Richard Spencer’s speech at the University of Florida.

President Trump, elected on a platform of white supremacy, xenophobia, isolationism, Islamophobia, and more than a hint of disdain for women and their bodies, has ushered in a whiplash of terrifying social policies. While he hadn’t yet been able to take away gains in health care overall, funding for women’s health, particularly reproductive health, has already seen a dramatic cut. In addition to working to privatize our public education system, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has rolled back programs focusing on prevention and response to violence against women on college campuses. Attorney General Jeff Sessions formalized frightening policies deporting undocumented residents. Undocumented individuals from Mexico, Central America, and Haiti have committed suicide or fled to Canada, while the Supreme Court finally allowed Trump’s “Muslim ban” to be enforced. This happened in the first week of December 2017, on the heels of the Republican-led Senate’s eleventh-hour, razor-thin majority vote in support of Trump’s tax reform, the greatest redistribution of wealth upward in the history of U.S. tax law. Trump’s pardon of Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was brought to justice following his illegal and inhumane treatment of undocumented people he kept in tents sweltering in the desert sun² sent a clear message to the world about the Trump administration’s priorities, as did the conditions attached to a six-month extension of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that grants limited rights to children of undocumented residents.

One can never catch up; barely a year later these particular assaults on humanity and dignity have been buried by many more. Millions of women (and some men) were retraumatized by official dismissal of concerns about Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh’s multiple counts of sexual assault. Kaepernick *did* lose his job, literally becoming a poster child for Nike.³ Deportation turned uglier as families were separated. Two children from Guatemala, seven-year-old Jakelin Caal Maquin and eight-year-old

Felipe Alonzo-Gomez, died in U.S. custody in December 2018. That same month, caving into right-wing pundits' bullying about the border wall, Trump announced a government shutdown that impacted 800,000 federal workers and millions of recipients of federal program resources. And the shutdown was felt worldwide: the website offering global climate data for scientists was down.

Seeing Our Connections

This short intro is already past tense, history. And it's a lot at once. It's how people experienced it, as simultaneous urgent crises. Many people I know have become overwhelmed, traumatized, hopeless. Speaking to these real and imminent fears, Toni Morrison said, moments of crisis are "precisely the time when artists go to work." These times have also energized writers of all sorts: activists and scholars as well as artists. The current moment calls for bold thinking and fresh analysis that doesn't shy away from asking the big questions. I'm writing this book because I believe that humanity is better than this, or can be. That we don't have to give in to our fears. It's now or never for us to act. The earth is sending loud and violent warnings that the current capitalist system is unsustainable.

It is also precisely during periods of "crisis" like these that the fog of ideology is easier to lift. Activist movements now are already adopting an intersectional approach, leading the way. But people who are going to one march this week against gun violence, another next week against family separation, or climate change, or women's rights to safety, or transgender people's right to exist, or science itself, risk reproducing a defensive, single-issue individualism, atomization, and compartmentalization—a "whack-a-mole" approach to resistance.

Our destinies are already intertwined, connected by legacies of colonialism, patriarchy, slavery, and capitalism. After World War II, within the United States in particular, a white "middle class" was created and sold the belief of endless growth. That growth has reached its natural limits. And the engines of growth are belching greenhouse gases, choking out other life. At some point this endless growth machine was going to come back and bite us. That time is now.

Rather than the endless whack-a-mole process of resisting, which is exhausting and burning people out, this moment calls upon us to see how

we are not only connected by these particular issues but also connected to communities that are differently situated along global capitalism's process of accumulation by appropriation. Folks whose bodies, families, languages, and religions have been targeted by this system built on inhumanity are building specific networks of solidarity. People who until now have been spared the brunt of the colonialist, white supremacist, cis-heteropatriarchal accumulation machine's violence need to put our own bodies on the line. Not just by carrying signs and chanting, but by educating ourselves about the ways in which these issues that appear on the surface to be particular local struggles are already interwoven together globally. More importantly, those of us who have found ourselves on the privileged side of these increasingly terrorizing inequalities need to do the self-reflection necessary to see how our lives are complicit in maintaining these systems. And when we do act—and we must act—to dismantle this privilege, we must do so with the understanding that these systems that might have temporarily benefited the privileged few need to be dismantled from within and without. The inhumanity of the genocide of Indigenous populations of the earth to make way for settler populations, and the economic system built off this theft and the savage system of slavery, reducing the entire planet, including women's bodies, to the status of private property, is not good for anyone. It is killing the planet, just as it is killing individuals who are fleeing their homelands seeking asylum.

If we—and by “we” I do mean everyone—are serious about our struggle to defend humanity against the worldwide systems of dehumanization, in all its specific local faces, we need to see the system for what it is. To do this requires what could be called an anthropological imagination.

An Anthropological Imagination

Taken in isolation, these sudden and urgent threats to humanity, to our very species, can be daunting. Increasingly, people are talking in apocalyptic terms:

Are we as a species careening toward our extinction?

How can we as humanity put a stop to our own destruction and the possible destruction of the planet?

Before we can act, we need the ability to see how issues such as the Syrian refugee crisis, the mass shootings in Parkland and El Paso, and the rising tide of ultra-right nationalism across Europe and the United States are all connected. Seeing how these global issues are lived and confronted by real, living human beings and how they are connected to other issues and people can be called an “anthropological imagination.” An anthropological imagination also underscores that these issues are products of human action, and therefore changeable: they are particular local manifestations of the inhumanity of our global political and economic system based on inequality and private profit seeking at the expense of the collective good.

But more than anything, an anthropological imagination helps inspire, reminding us, in the words of the World Social Forum, that “another world is possible.” For this world to be imagined into being, we must also heed the warning of the U.S. Social Forum, “another U.S. is necessary.” This requires us to act.

I am certainly not the first to use the term “anthropological imagination”; it has mostly been used by anthropologists to conceptualize their particular field site or writing.⁴ Ilana Gershon used the term to discuss how anthropologists engage social issues.⁵ It was also in the title of the 2018 American Anthropological Association conference.

And as noted in King’s note to Chávez from the start of this book, I am certainly not the first to apply an anthropological imagination, seeing various struggles for dignity and humanity as one. Understanding this interconnection, today’s activists practice intersectionality, a politics of both/and, not either/or. Many call for a politics of solidarity that moves beyond “allies” and into “accomplices,” dismantling privilege and sharing in the struggle to the end.

I define the anthropological imagination as the ability of people to see as connected species-level phenomena to individual lived experiences, understanding particular local injustices as manifestations of global capitalism, built on the theft of Indigenous lands and plantation slavery, buttressed by patriarchy, and hence connected to one another. Products of human action, these injustices are therefore changeable. Importantly, an anthropological imagination also sees these global and species-level phenomena as lived, understood, confronted, and resisted by real human beings. We must identify the humanity in others, and the humanity in their struggle, while affirming particular identities and challenging differential privilege: an anthropological imagination inspires radical empathy and solidarity.

Understanding Humanity

To talk about our extinction is by definition talking about our species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*. This is the “Anthropos,” which, until feminist anthropologists intervened, was translated as “man.” The accepted scientific term is now “humankind,” which, while gender neutral, lacks the political dimension of “humanity.” Anthropology is its study.

Anthropology’s roots go back to ancient Greece, when Herodotus—known as a historian for his analysis of the Greek-Persian War published in 440 BCE—analyzed information written about the Persian groups that the Greek armies conquered.⁶ Tunisian scholar Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) also theorized about culture and society. During the Renaissance, several European world travelers left behind “exotic” tales, and later the imperialism and colonialism of the 1800s put foreign lands in direct contact with one another, formalizing curiosity about the customs of other cultures. Formalized in this imperialist context, anthropology classified human individuals and societies along a single evolutionary line, with European physical and cultural traits (not surprisingly) ranked most evolved. Critiquing what he called “armchair” anthropology, Franz Boas, a German-born Jewish immigrant to the United States, assembled the “four fields” (archaeology and physical, linguistic, and sociocultural anthropology) to combat the dominant ideas of racism and xenophobia prevalent at the turn of the twentieth century. While Boas exhorted anthropologists to do fieldwork, this dictum was formalized, in part accidentally, by Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish immigrant to the United Kingdom. During World War I, as an enemy combatant, Malinowski was sent to the faraway Trobriand Islands (in today’s Papua New Guinea) for two years, and later he wrote about his experiences among the people there. These two “patriarchs” formalized anthropology in their adopted home countries: Boasian U.S. anthropology was set on a path toward valuing specificity and “cultural relativism”—trying to understand phenomena within a cultural context—while Malinowskian British anthropology looked for generalizable patterns and formalized “functionalism”—understanding how these cultural traits served to maintain the social order.⁷ French anthropology was heavily influenced by the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss, identifying ways in which culture in the minds of people reproduced mental models, including binary oppositions. All three countries had colonial skeletons in the closet, and all three attempted to reinvent themselves during the turbulent upheavals of the 1960s.⁸

An Evolution of Evolution

Anthropological ideas have found their way into popular discussion. For example, social Darwinism, sometimes called survival of the fittest, is used to justify inequality, with the argument that the current social system is a result of genetic or reproductive fitness.⁹

However, a nuanced understanding of evolution argues just the opposite. Just like the moths studied by Charles Darwin at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, we too as a species are finding ourselves at a similar precipice. White moths had more easily hidden from prey before the soot from London factories turned buildings black and gray. Following, black moths had better cover and thus were more likely to survive. But of course, unlike the moths, the changing conditions that humans have to adapt to are largely of our own making. Foregrounding the role of humans in shaping the environment, some scientists call our geological epoch the “Anthropocene.”

If anything, “evolution” teaches us that diversity, flexibility, and adaptiveness to change are keys to our survival. While certain classes, races, and genders of people have decidedly been favored in the global capitalist economic system, it is increasingly evident that our planet is sending loud and violent warnings that this system must change. If humans are to survive, we need to embrace our differences and adapt to the new conditions that we created, to welcome change.

How can we learn to live on this planet we are rapidly using up? In other words, how can we live within our means—our “carrying capacity”? While human beings have demonstrated our capacity for destruction, violence, aggression, marking territory, and massive systems of enslavement, inequality, and ideology justifying the plunder of the world’s resources, we have also demonstrated in key moments that we have the capacity for collective solidarity, cooperation, and love—the love of Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Che Guevara, Dean Spade, Stephanie Mott, bell hooks, James Baldwin, Valarie Kaur and Patrick Cheng, not to mention Jesus. As Cornel West and Michael Eric Dyson said, justice is what love looks like in public.¹⁰ Or as Chela Sandoval has argued, love is the methodology of liberation.¹¹ It is the core of empathy, without which transforming the world will not be possible.

Radical Empathy

Obama's first Supreme Court nominee, Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina appointed to the bench in May 2009 and only the third woman, raised a ruckus in some circles because of her use of "empathy."¹² Meryl Streep, verbalizing the strain of hope in many, put the word back into mainstream discourse in her Golden Globes acceptance speech in January 2017, less than two weeks before Trump's inauguration. Streep said that actors offer the world lessons in empathy, playing the part of someone else, experiencing what it feels like to be someone who may be different from ourselves.

Anthropology has—in its best moments—always had this same potential, to imagine how people in different cultures live and understand the world, in our promotion of cultural relativism. However, the particular urgency of today's interconnected crises requires more than just suspending judgment. We need to identify the ways in which one's identity categories within a society limit one's choices, seeing how local, lived experiences are intertwined with global, species-level phenomena. As Dána-Ain Davis and others have argued, what's needed now more than ever is not just empathy but radical empathy.¹³

What is radical empathy?

- Being able to see the humanity in people defined as your enemy by for-profit media and a seemingly endless War on Terror.
- Being able to identify with a struggle for justice that does not directly impact the community you care about or identify with connected to your own.
- Understanding that the undocumented, nonbinary gendered, Muslim, or any other person does not exist for people's moral edification or education but that "they" too are "us." That humanity itself is always (already) hyphenated. That no one gets to claim universality based on the fact that history textbooks, evening news programs, Bibles, and entertainment programs reflect a certain norm of a middle-class, patriarchal, white, Christian, suburban household as "human" and that everyone else has to struggle to claim and reclaim the status of "person."
- That we are all queer to someone else.
- That it might just be *our* way of life that is strange, that needs to change.

Radical empathy also means that we each need to be willing to stand up for others caught in the system, being denied health care, or clean water, or the right to worship, or freedom from sexual harassment or assault, or the right to safety when going to the bathroom, or the right to exist because they too are human, and because we need everyone's perspective to survive. Preventing our pending extinction reminds us all of our shared interest.

All this is to say that radical empathy is NOT an abstract, distant, privileged notion of being a “citizen of the world,” or what Teju Cole called the “white savior industrial complex,” being a do-gooder or a weekend activist.¹⁴ In order to ensure my own survival, the survival of my children, and theirs, and theirs, I need to join in solidarity with marginalized groups engaging in local struggles for liberation. Because whether it is around the corner or around the world, our struggles are against the same inhumanity, only in a particular local form, just as the worldwide economic system based on profit, exploitation, and inequality limits my own humanity in particular ways.

And radical empathy can lift the fog of privilege, helping name and identify specific ways inequalities and systems of oppression are felt differentially, and how they shape everyday life.

Back in the Matrix

My own anthropological imagination began while I was an organizer in the Twin Cities in the late 1990s, including over two years at the now-defunct St. Paul Tenants Union. I saw how people could build solidarity across racial identities and forge a common interest, then work together to benefit all, an element of what C. Wright Mills called a “sociological imagination.”¹⁵ I was inspired by and learned from activists—who were what Antonio Gramsci called “organic intellectuals”—working together until we were all laid off, as the money ran out. I didn't know the word “neoliberalism” at the time, but I understood what Tenants Union members, people barely scraping by, knew in their gut: their jobs were being “downsized.”¹⁶ Corporations relocating their operations overseas in a “race to the bottom” hollowed out cities in the United States, taking their corporate giving programs with them.

Rather than starting over with another grassroots organization, I decided to go to graduate school to study the impacts of funding on nonprofits (outside the United States, they are called NGOs, nongovernmental organizations).

I have been working in and writing about Haiti since 2001. In Haiti I learned other elements of an anthropological imagination: that we are already connected, that local struggles for justice are merely different aspects of the same fight for equality, for humanity. Importantly, I saw, lived, and breathed the impacts of neoliberalism.

Ever since I returned to Santa Barbara from my dissertation research in 2005, literally in tears in the Costco parking lot because of reverse culture shock, I have referred to the United States as “the Matrix,” a virtual reality simulation. Most U.S. Americans don’t know where our electricity or food comes from, or our water, nor where it goes. We can get caught up in the latest “binge-worthy” reality TV show or the newest version of the iPhone, while people in Haiti pray for rain to end their two-year drought. For at least the last twenty-seven years since my Haitian colleagues began documenting it, average rainfall there went down every year. Now, every six months or so, flash floods destroy entire crops. In October 2016, Hurricane Matthew was the worst storm to hit Haiti since 1954.¹⁷ Climate change is yet another example of the injustice befalling the people of Haiti, descendants of one of the first movements to affirm that Black lives matter, the Haitian Revolution, which decisively altered the course of Atlantic history.

Living in Haiti clarified a few things for me: In Haiti, you don’t have to wonder where your trash goes. You don’t have to see how the “other half” lives. The naked realities of global capitalism are all too real, and all too visible. To go to a grocery store or ATM requires armed guards. At first, I tried to buy local and skip the air conditioning. It was all too easy to blame what some called Haiti’s “morally repugnant elite” for excluding Haiti’s poor majority while letting people like me in.¹⁸ As Gina Athena Ulysse has powerfully argued, quoting Edwidge Danticat, my white skin—and U.S. passport—was my “three-piece suit,” invisible to me.¹⁹ More than a three-piece suit, my U.S. passport allows me to not see the guns that guard far more than a supermarket. I literally fly over them. The U.S. military has always been trained on Haiti’s poor majority, pouncing on people risking their lives in rickety boats, throwing them into dark, hidden detention centers like Krome, near Miami.

Being a *blan*—which in Haiti means both white person and foreigner—helped me to see the multiple layers of racism operating in Haiti, the difference between being marked as “other” and systematic white privilege. And being a solidarity activist in Haiti has helped me to see issues more clearly: I have come to see Haiti not as an “exceptional” case or somehow beyond

the pale, but as an early warning, a canary in the coal mine, since contradictions and inequalities within the capitalist system are easier to see in places like Haiti.

One key similarity among contemporary struggles for justice is the assertion of humanity. The social movement in Haiti that in 1986 ended the U.S.-supported dictatorship asserted boldly, *tout moun se moun*. Everyone is a person. But how can we see these various struggles as directly connected? Having an anthropological imagination brings us closer to a transformative, identity-conscious solidarity politics. When we are forced to be reactive and defensive, struggling to keep up with events, and competing for tweets, airtime, and people's limited attention, or what can be called "compassion fatigue," we lose sight of our common struggles. We need to identify not just humanity, but the specific processes of dehumanization that operate as the seemingly permanent capitalist war machine targets particular groups of people. Human life is worth defending, and we should operate from that assertion. Identifying who is funding the hate, and who stands to benefit when people are pitted against one another, offers a useful counterpart to the ideological work being done by factions that want to facilitate the inhumanity of capitalist economic exchange. Having something to fight *for*, a unifying platform that is not a "big tent" or a "least common denominator" politics, something that can inspire and be easily understood and is harder to malign, has been missing for quite some time, at least in the United States.

Confronting Issues

An anthropological imagination helps us highlight the linkages between various issues, particularly when we consider an expanded timeline. By understanding just how out of step the current capitalist system is with the vast majority of humanity's time on this earth, we can also identify how issues usually confronted individually in the single-issue, whack-a-mole approach to activism are connected to this larger system. Looking at the long view, which we'll cover in the next chapter, helps challenge the grip of what seems "normal," to render the familiar strange and therefore change it.

As chapter 2 argues, current global capitalism was born from plantation slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Once institutionalized, the cultures supporting African slavery needed an entire cultural apparatus to produce

ideology normalizing it: white supremacy. While humans have always sorted people into an “in-group” and “out-group,” *race* as we have come to know it was a coproduction of capitalism, solidified by elites to stoke divisions between groups that otherwise might have realized they had issues in common, and to disrupt solidarity within working classes. Successfully dismantling white supremacy requires drawing upon holism, seeing the connections between our political and economic system and the multitude of dehumanizing cultural apparatuses that prop it up. An anthropological imagination helps us value specificity—specific identities and specific sites of struggle—while gesturing toward possible points of intersection and solidarity.

Climate change, discussed in chapter 3, is one of the most urgent issues facing humanity. An anthropological imagination helps us simultaneously identify solutions to the global system and local manifestations of the problem. It is not enough to divest from fossil fuels. We must also support local struggles in places like Standing Rock, North Dakota, where Indigenous communities defended their sacred sites and their right to clean water against construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Protesters on the ground knew their struggle was at once global and local, about defending their local sovereignty and also stemming the tide against climate change. The pipeline had investors as well; not surprisingly, they are some of the same investors who profit from injustices in other local sites. Unraveling the larger system starts with concentrated, principled, inspired local action, and seeing how these are connected to the larger struggle. While tugging at the loose thread, we need to examine and address the connections between climate justice and the ways of life we’ve grown accustomed to or aspire to, given media messages we are fed that encourage consumption. Eventually we’ll encounter other groups tugging at the threads of other local injustices, already knotted into a global web of foreign investors and transnational companies gaming the system.

Migration and migrants are increasingly targeted, not only in the United States, but in Europe and other capitalist centers. Several countries are confronting a wave of xenophobic nationalism. Chapter 4 offers an anthropological approach to understanding migration. An anthropological imagination helps us at once value the particularities of each case and defend the rights of people caught in the system at risk of deportation or being killed, whose lives are in the hands of mercenaries, while also at the same time attempting to identify common patterns, exploring the connections

between cases, and interrogating and confronting the system that keeps people on the margins. From our species' point of view, this current system of border patrols, international conventions unevenly applied, War on Terror, and racist "populist" reaction does not fit with our propensity for mobility. However, the current system serves many interests: it reinforces borders, defines who has which entitlement to what wealth, and maintains a global economy while simultaneously buttressing inequality. Capitalism is built on upholding the settler colonial fiction of private property. At the same time, our anthropological imagination must also firmly root itself on the real experience of people who are just trying to get by, to humanize those who have been used as scapegoats, to inspire empathy. Each time someone is deported or denied asylum, it is easier for the global capitalist class and the state system they have co-opted to maintain an even tighter system of borders and checkpoints. And each time it happens, human life is devalued. To defend immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers also requires us to take a hard look at the racism embedded in the global capitalist order.

One strategy to confront specific local injustices triggered or exacerbated by global capitalism is to defend the "public" against further encroachment by private interests. One place to draw the line in the sand, a site for this struggle, is public education, particularly at universities. Chapter 5 discusses the need to dismantle the ivory tower and decolonize knowledge, suggesting potential solutions. The discussion highlights roles universities play in the war machine, targeting and profiling minority identities, and the large shadow of student debt looming over a generation, particularly communities of color. Struggles for justice are always "inside" and "outside." This current moment of all-out war against immigrants, Muslims, African Americans, women and women's bodies, transgender people, the climate, and science itself demands that we build on the town-gown coalition that created radical ethnic studies and opened up spaces for inclusion of more diverse voices.

Humanity's Last Stand asserts and affirms that humanity's urgent contemporary crises can—and must—be solved. Pulling together the strands of the rest of the book, the short concluding chapter offers radical, yet practical, solutions for real-world engagement with activist social movements: creating new venues and media to shift public dialogue, shifting relationships of power, and informing and transforming policy.

This book aims to do for anthropology what C. Wright Mills's (1959) *The Sociological Imagination* did for that discipline. Mills's masterwork

reinvigorated the field, readying sociologists for engagement with the civil rights movement and quagmire regarding the U.S. engagement in the Vietnam War. It also was useful as a text for social movements in their consciousness-raising exercises.

Unfortunately for the future of our species, we have little time to lose and *need* to act now; we need to first be able to articulate what we are fighting for. Truly this is humanity's last stand: we can let the endless growth machine and its accompanying systems of oppressions choke the planet and kill one another, or we can rise up to support locally waged struggles for justice linked with defending humanity. We need an anthropolitics more than ever.

I literally couldn't write this book fast enough. No sooner did I finish a draft of a chapter on migration than another, more terrifying twist came. After I finished a discussion of dismantling the ivory tower and decolonizing anthropology, a scandal rocked the field. When the final text went to press in March 2020, COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, had four days before just been declared a "pandemic," and whole cities and even countries had been placed on lockdown. By the time of publication, events discussed in this book will likely already be taught as history—if at all. Centuries from now—if we survive, that is—researchers will point to the actions of our generation as pivotal.

I also couldn't possibly be exhaustive: new issues present themselves every day. New activist collectives are coming together to unravel this centuries-old system of oppression that is tightening its grip. A fully actualized and engaged anthropological imagination can address head-on humanity's urgent contemporary crises and lay the groundwork of radical empathy and solidarity we need to face the issues of tomorrow.

We have our work to do. I hope that this book plays some small role in bringing these issues to the forefront, exploring connections, and raising people's conscience. The first step to creating a better world is to imagine it.