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## Confronting the Elephant in the Living Room

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As most aware environmental activists know, the great unacknowledged elephant today is our collective inability to respond effectively to the life diminishing and civilization threatening crisis well underway.

To wit: **IF**

- [Planetary limits](#) have been exceeded or near so, CO2 is leading to climate chaos. We are exceeding the [available ecological resource flow](#), etc.
- Our current economic and social systems, with their overwhelming inertia, are driving us to a 6°C/10°F temperature increase, ruining everything we care about and extinguishing humanity.
- We are poisoning our oceans [significantly with CO2 and other chemicals](#) leading to dead oceans. No oceans, no us.
- We are precipitating a [public health crisis](#) of unprecedented scale and urgency.

**THEN:**

- Why is there no cultural conversation about any of this?
- Why is there not even a legitimate attempt to make these life extinguishing and humanity threatening crises part of our cultural conversation?

Most aware environmental-activists do know the facts related to these global, systemic, immediate, and chronic crises. More, we know these problems are immense, complex, and unprecedented.

**BUT:**

- Even those who know the details of these interconnected crises do not see a relevant role they can play in addressing these crises.
- Even those who know the details do not see relevant cultural institutions that can engage on these problems. The fossil fuel industry, the dominant cultural operative, blindly continues along its relentless self-destructive means and mechanisms, while holding government and policy both captive and paralyzed.
- Crucially, the momentum of the current operating system is so powerful, pervasive, and so completely encompassing that effective change seems hopeless. Thus, it seems that nothing can be done to effect the changes needed to remediate the interconnected crises.

**SO**, if our culture is caught in a trance, and in an addiction to the consumption merry-go-round, seemingly with no way to get off, what can be done?

**CLEARLY, SOMETHING OR SOMEONE POWERFUL MUST INTERVENE**, provide the intervention needed to put our addicted culture on the path to recovery. Something must provide us with a collective wake-up call clear and powerful enough to snap us out of our trance. Someone must be the adult in the room pointing out the elephant so that we can see it and respond effectively.

**WHAT IS THAT SOMETHING, WHO ARE THE SOMEONES TO DO IT?**

**LET'S SUPPOSE THAT:**

- Nearly limitless financial, personal and professional resources were available.
- The means and mechanisms for the needed cultural intervention—a wake-up call from the trance and effective responses to the crisis—were available.

**IS THERE A PLAUSIBLE PICTURE OF HOW THIS INTERVENTION MIGHT ACTUALLY HAPPEN?**

- First, Philanthropists come through. If the biggest philanthropists put up 1% of the funds from The Giving Pledge's 125+ billionaires—who have pledged to give half of their fortune—there would be more than **\$6 Billion** available for the intervention, wake-up call and awareness campaign.
- The cultural conversation, intervention, and wake-up would happen in tens of thousands of churches and civic auditoriums across every zip code and community in the US. The US is key because the US is far behind other nations, particularly Europe, and the US must lead if we are to constrain climate chaos. To date, the US response, even with Obama's Climate deal with China, [does not lead the world toward slowing climate warming.](#)

- The media saturation accompanying would look like a Presidential Campaign cycle media blitz. Many films like [Merchants of Doubt](#) and [This Changes Everything](#) and information packets would be universally available. Dozens of free movies, plays, television programs, hundreds of videos, millions of followers on Facebook and Twitter, etc.
- Every US citizen would be contacted by phone and/or in person, like the Obama Campaign, by tens of thousands of workers and volunteers. The story of the crises would be told and effective responses detailed.
- Policy responses would be provided to begin to address the interconnected crises, simple and effective like: (1) put a price on harmful fossil fuel pollution, (2) eliminate fossil fuel incentives and tax breaks, (3) provide incentives for renewables, and (4) transform our energy-intensive infrastructure immediately.
- History has demonstrated that just [3.5% of citizens](#)—impassioned and engaged in this campaign—[can transform the future](#).

The [Association for the Tree of Life](#) is asking Philanthropy for 30 times the current funding for a massive Climate and Ecology Movement that would make plausible a U-Turn on carbon fuels, along with the end to the consumption and population crises.

[ASK PHILANTHROPISTS: Climate Breakthrough Now! - #1](#)

Please watch and share the initiative's first film in a series designed to push Philanthropy toward this goal.

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*MAHB-UTS Blogs are a joint venture between the University of Technology Sydney and the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere. Questions should be directed to [joan@mahbonline.org](mailto:joan@mahbonline.org)*

MAHB Blog: <http://mahb.stanford.edu/blog/confronting-the-elephant-in-the-living-room/>