On Revolution:

It's spring. The air is warm, the sun comes out occasionally, and the time is right to plant a garden. Grabbing a few tools you head into your backyard, only to find that *gasp* there is no backyard, only blackberry brambles. In blind fury, you chop at the branches until you can see the grass again. This is an incredible amount of work. Exhausted and completely drained of energy, you head back inside to take a nap, satisfied that you have given your all and rid your yard of blackberries. A week or two later, when you have some time off of work, you decide to have another go at your garden. Stepping out into the spring sunshine, you see that all of the brambles have grown back, thicker and thornier than ever! Angry and defeated, you give up. You never really wanted a garden, anyway.

Look outside your window. What do you see? (I mean, besides the blackberry bushes.) Homelessness. Unemployment. Hunger. Pollution. Waste. Violence. Racism. To name a few. Look closer, and the list goes on.

Maybe you live in a nice neighborhood. Maybe the view from your window is sunshine and BMW's and blonde, well-fed children skipping rope. Then how about the things you don't see? How about the view overseas, in third world countries, and among the lower classes all over the world? Slave labor. Starvation. Disease.

Have you ever fought for something you believed in? Have you ever taken part in a march, joined an organization, petitioned to or otherwise utilized the options available to those of us who would like to change the world we live in? If you have, you know how disappointing the work can be. The problems we face in our society are overwhelming, much larger and more complex than one person can hope to untangle. Some of us work our whole lives in various "movements" without bringing about any significant change. It's like spitting in the ocean. After a while you bum out. Slowly the fire inside you dies, until there are only embers, and then you know it's time to buy that Subaru outback and park it in front of your house in southeast Portland. Why does this happen? Why do we become disillusioned? Why do we give up?

Some will argue that we are not fighting in vain, that various movements of the past have been successful in changing certain aspects of our society for the better. The end of slavery, the eight hour workday, and the woman's right to vote, these were the results of mass movements and often violent uprisings. And yet the basic repressive structure of our country remains the same. Instead of Africans working in cotton fields we have Mexican immigrants picking strawberries for five, dollars a day, and prisoners (America has more people in prison than any other country) making bras for Victoria's secret in sweatshop like conditions without pay. Not to mention the slave labor overseas, which puts the clothes on our backs and the greenbacks in our economy. Women may be able to vote, but they are paid less than men for the same jobs and we have yet to see a woman president, which is proof that the basic structure of our government has not changed.

Why change the basic structure of our government? Why not treat each problem individually? Why not fight to save our forests, march to stop war, etc.? While all of the people involved in various movements in this country are doing wonderful work, and sacrificing everything to the fight for change, this is a bit like hacking away at the branches of a blackberry bush, without digging it out by the root. The work is exhausting, but as long as the root of the problem is ignored, the branches will grow back stronger than ever, leaving those fighting for social & political change exhausted and disillusioned.

Let's look at the peace movement of the nineteen sixties. Millions of people were involved in the movement against the Vietnam War, yet the war continued, undeterred. The peace movement was the largest social change movement in American history, yet at its peak president Nixon initiated Vietnamization, adding five more years to the imperialist war. Obviously, if a large portion of the country is in the street shouting for peace and the war continues, something is wrong. In reformist politics, the people channel all their energies into specific issues, and can pat themselves on the back for doing good work, while the basic structure of the government is unchanged, and the symptoms of a sick system (for example war) remain. For this reason the US government encourages reformist politics. Let the steam off, and guarantee that the system itself will never be threatened.

The only way to alter the basic structure of the US government, and stop the decay of our society, and societies all over the world, is through revolution. Revolution will come about only when we cultivate communities that can support themselves outside of the capitalist system. Through community support networks, we can bring about revolution simply by ceasing to depend on the institutions of capitalism, and capitalism will simply cease to exist. Corporations only exist because we buy their products. Armies only exist because civilians offer themselves up to be soldiers. A religion can only exist if people believe in a deity. As soon as that belief is gone, the deity no longer has power.

Some people will argue over the outcome of a revolution, debating on different versions of utopia, but there will never be a utopia. We don't need revolution because it's necessary for everyone to agree on the way we want to live. We need revolution because our society is sick.

The question is not "what if we fail," but "what do we have to lose?"