

Language ▾

Movement Building with Radiohead



UPDATE 6/17/12: Yesterday the stage collapsed before the Radiohead show in Toronto and we lost Scott Johnson, the drum technician and a friend from the tour. Miraculously the others from the crew that were injured are ok. I was working with our 350.org volunteers at the time away from the stage (all are uninjured), and am grateful to all of them for being attentive and supportive. Our love and support goes out to Scott's family from the 350.org team. –Justin

I am on tour with Radiohead. I still can't quite believe that.

Then I pinch myself, I look around at the dedicated and hardworking production crew rigging and lighting and setting up the venue and at the band rehearsing on stage, and I remember I've got work to do: I'm here to build the climate movement.



I'm here because Thom Yorke, Radiohead's lead singer, happens to be a big fan of ours at 350.org and specially invited us to join him for the US+Canada leg of their tour in May and June. And to give you a sense of what kind of fans they are, when I joined on in the end of May they made me officially part of the production crew, complete with a spot on the tour buses, a big lighting box for our gear that goes on the trucks, and credentials to get where I need to go backstage and around the venue. Radiohead is serious about supporting 350.org.

I dig that, because I'm pretty serious about supporting 350.org and the grassroots movement we're building, too. So when I get to meet our 20 new volunteers for each concert, and as we prepare for the hordes of 10,000 or 20,000 or 30,000 concertgoers, I pose this question: what can we do with our time and talents to build the climate movement today?

It's not a trivial question, and the ideas people share always inspire me.



Because when we're talking about building the climate movement, we're talking about empowering leaders to fight one of the biggest fights we've ever had to face together as a civilization. It would be tempting to spend the couple hours we have before Radiohead takes the stage handing out fliers and standing passively with clipboards and 350 t-shirts, but I question how empowering just nabbing people's email addresses that way is. That's why I've been so excited to see volunteers in Detroit use a giant white bedsheet and ask passers-by to grab a marker sketch out what they can do to save the planet, taking that moment to tell them about 350 and the local climate bike ride next week. Or to see the Boston and Newark volunteers craft clever signs that play off of Radiohead lyrics ("Pollution Makes Weird Fishes" and "I Might Be Wrong... but not about climate change" are favorites of mine) and watch as concertgoers started approaching *us* wanting to take pictures with our signs. One Newark volunteer tweeted those pictures at the people who had twitter usernames and actually got "twitter-jailed" — locked out of twitter because she sent more than 100 tweets in the first hour.

In Chicago I was really moved to have my entire family join in as volunteers for 350. My dad initiated conversation by holding a sign that said "ask me for two things I know about Radiohead, or for a magic trick". He'd tell them about the backdrop for the stage made out of plastic water bottles or pull a handkerchief out of thin air, after which they'd ask "so what's 350 doing here?". Another volunteer held a sign that just said "Ask me a question", and when someone came up and asked "What is the capitol of Iceland?" he responded "Ummm... Reykjavik, I think", to which the concertgoer responded "Huh, yeah. So what's 350 about?"

In Philly our volunteers staged a massive game of Ultimate Rock-Paper-Scissors — a full-body version in tournament style with the twist that whoever loses has to become an overly-animated cheerleader for the winner as they go on to compete in their next match. After the final showdown when Frank, a concertgoer, won with 11 raucous supporters behind him, we bestowed him a 350 shirt as his prize, and then everyone started talking about what a fun bunch people 350.org volunteers are. I certainly agree, and couldn't be

happier that we're sending that message when we're tabling at a Radiohead concert.



But there's another kind of movement building going on that, to be honest, excites me even more than the 2,202 email addresses we've gotten so far and the 1,232 photos on my camera alone and the hundreds of tweets and the fully decorated collage of promises to save the planet. I believe movements are built through relationships and by bringing together, supporting and empowering people who take leadership, which means that some of the most important movement building at these Radiohead concerts happens before doors even open. It happens when the 21 of us sit down around our two empty tables, with Radiohead in soundcheck playing "Everything In Its Right Place" in the background, and go around the circle sharing our name, place and a moment when we felt empowered. It happens in the final few minutes before "doors" as we're helping each other to finish signs or hang banners, and when we agree together on a plan that feels like the best way to build the climate movement with the unique mix of people we have. It happens when we all rally around a concrete goal like getting 350 people to sign up, and when we experience the satisfaction together of meeting and passing the goal. And of course, it happens when we do the kinds of things we social-change-makers don't always remember to do: when we put the clipboards down, when we celebrate the good work we've done, and when go watch an amazing Radiohead concert together.

I won't lie: hanging with Thom Yorke backstage and talking about drums with Phil and Clive (Radiohead's two drummers; idols of mine) is pretty amazing, but when I'm face to face with a group of people who are helping to change the world, nothing gives me more excitement and hope than building the movement together.



For more photos from the road see our Flickr Set: [350+Radiohead](#).

Justin **Justin Haaheim**
Haaheim June 16, 2012

Share on Facebook

Share on Twitter

Featured Projects and Campaigns



Off + On: Live Show From NYC
A show to discuss the future of the climate movement.



The Road Through Paris
Fighting for a climate deal that keeps fossil fuels in the ground.



Fossil Free
Divest from fossil fuels.



Stop the Keystone XL Pipeline
Stop the fuse to the largest carbon bomb on the planet.



350 GLOBAL MAP

Check out local groups around the world on the global map!

LAUNCH THE MAP

[More Campaigns →](#)

[Tweets by @350](#)

ABOUT

[Media Room](#)

[What We Do](#)

[Contact](#)

[Team](#)

[Jobs](#)

[Search](#)

CAMPAIGNS

[Current](#)

[By Region](#)

[By Topic](#)

MORE...

[Update Your Donation](#)

[Change Your Info](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Service](#)

[350 Action](#)

350.org is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization registered in the United States.