

# A Clean SLATE



Is your New Year's resolution to save the world? You could make it a little bit brighter in 2024, says *TESSA DUNTHORNE*



THE BIG ONE: STARTING

## ACT – AND ACT NOW *Greta Thunberg*

‘It’s been my 258th weeks of protests – there’s no other option than to do this. This is not just polar bears or melting glaciers. This is extremely, extremely serious. And we can all do something about it – I think we all underestimate how much we can do about it. The sense of powerlessness is a very strong currency that the people in power benefit from. But as soon as we start to reclaim that power, we can shake things up. When I look back, I want to be able to say I did everything I possibly could.’

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Greta Thunberg challenges us to take action in 2024

There’s something about a clean slate. The idea – of what was called a *tabula rasa* in Latin – is age-old. It was an idea first set out by the Greeks (Aristotle and his ilk), who believed we were born empty and ready to be molded by whatever experiences we met along our journeys.

And isn’t the turn of the clock from 31 December to 1 January simply a new *tabula rasa*; a moment to start afresh? Statistics tell us that most will focus this sense of renewal on the self. When 30 million Britons make a New Year’s resolution this year, 28 percent of these goals will revolve around health, another 27 percent personal finances. Not many will look outwards.

Perhaps, though, it’s time to rethink that. While we may aspire to a *tabula rasa*, we certainly won’t actually inherit a blank slate next year – we exit the hottest global year on record with an increasingly polarised political stage. Yes, we have promise and potential for change, once the bubbles have finally fallen flat on the first of January 2024, but our *tabula* has already been marked in a way that we cannot erase.

So, grab a pencil, and get to work on redrawing a new slate in 2024. Here are the New Year’s resolutions that just might help make the world a better place.

THE FINANCE ONE:  
DO BUSINESS BETTER

You have around 80,000 hours in your career (according to *80000hours.org*). Your career – and your business, if you run one – is the area in your life in which you are likely to have the most impact on the world. So why not use it to change the world?

**TIP THE EARTH**

Arizona Muse, founder of *Dirt*

‘You tip your servers, would you tip the earth? We’re engaging restaurants to support the farmers who regenerate soil globally this year; by signing up your business to #TipTheEarth, you’re supporting DIRT charity in this work. Our scheme adds an optional one percent tip to each bill – it’s not just restaurants, it’s also spas, hotels, bars and members’ clubs we hope will sign up.’ *dirt.charity*

**SHARE FOOD**

Alyson Walsh, *Fareshare* commercial director

‘We want to hear from business owners who’d help unlock their surplus food for redistribution; last year, *Fareshare* redistributed the equivalent of 128 million meals. This food saves charities money, meaning they can invest in vital wraparound services, including support for mental health, domestic violence, unemployment, housing and debt, as well as bringing down levels of food waste.’ *fareshare.org.uk*

**GET CERTIFIED**

Allyson Bartlett, *1% For The Planet* VP Brand & Marketing

‘1% for the Planet is an accountability partner for businesses looking to make real, tangible impact. Our logo is highly recognisable and trusted by consumers around the globe. Doing better by people and the planet is good for business—and certification is a powerful way to start off the new year.’ *onepercentfortheplanet.org*

THE HEALTH ONE:  
CITIZENS NOT CONSUMERS

Work on yourself in the coming year – but know that you can’t go it alone. As Jon Alexander says in his advice below, 2024 is the year to blossom into being a citizen rather than a consumer, and acting as part of a community. Plus, there are personal benefits to navigating the world as part of one; as Netflix’s *Secrets Of The Blue Zones* points out, community is a means by which you can extend your healthspan. So maybe it also ticks that personal health New Year’s resolution after all.

**SAY NO TO SELF-INTEREST**

Jon Alexander, author of *Citizens*

‘We’ve been living with a “consumer story” for the past 80 years, where our role as individuals is to pursue our own self-interest. This story makes us into independent individuals, where we define ourselves through competition. But individual action alone can’t fix the problems we face. A powerful act to take in the next year is to start by simply noticing this “consumer story” in the messages you receive from companies and politicians. Look around you. Be a citizen in the coming year, not a consumer – someone who is interdependent and social.’

**LOOK LOCAL FIRST**

Jade Brudenell, Exec Director of *Conservation Collective*

‘From my side, everyone can get involved with restoring nature locally, wherever they call home: voting, volunteering, gardening, and growing. See Isabella Tree’s *Book of Wilding*. And did you know locally led restoration projects are six to 20 times more likely to achieve long-term success and bring environmental and economic benefits to their communities than non-local ones?’

**PLANT SEEDS OF CHANGE**

Ellen Miles, author of *Get Guerrilla Gardening*; @OctaviaChill

‘Community gardening is fantastic for the environment; the people around you; and for yourself. Through guerrilla gardening (planting up neglected corners of my area with neighbours), I’ve made lifelong friends, brought bees and other wildlife to previously desolate street corners, and gained a sense of peace, purpose and pride in the process. Start by finding an existing local group or garden to join – they’ll show you the ropes. (Or read my book)!’

**MICRO-VOLUNTEER**

Charlotte Lister, Ms Eco UK

‘I micro-volunteer for the RSPCA. It’s only a small commitment: they put up tasks that you then complete throughout the year. These range from litter picking and filling out surveys, to putting out bird treats and cleaning animal feeders.’ ■



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