



TAKE A DEEP AND MEANINGFUL B

SAY WHO YOU ARE
SAY WHERE YOU COME
SAY WHERE YOU ARE
SAY HOW YOU'LL GET
READ WHAT YOU'VE
ERASE NOTHING
CAPTURE YOUR MO
RELENTLESS THO

EDITING

YOU NEED A MANIFESTO

Charlotte Burgess-Auburn



Is it just me? Or do you feel like this moment, right now, is the most complex, fraught, pivotal, dangerous, and important moment that has ever been?

Change is upon us. The future is (mercifully) unwritten, but increasingly unknown. Never mind the answers; we don't even have the questions that will arise. It's an awkward situation at best, and terrifying at worst. It feels like history is hurtling toward us like the dinosaur-killing asteroid, and we're still trying to get to work on time.

Many arcs are playing out that will require all our power to bend them toward the justice we know is there. And, yes, it rests on your shoulders to do the work. Right now, with the tools in your hands, creative work is more powerful than ever. Anything that can be imagined can be made. Your work will move mountains, cure plagues, sway rulers, and change the world. For good. And for ill.

You are responsible for your own learning, your own path, your own success, your own ethics. It's not easy to do both well and good. You need agency to act and humility to learn.

To thrive in the tumultuous present and make some headway toward the future you're looking for, you'll have to get comfortable with managing a flood of choices, holding fast against the continuous threat of attention-drain, and doing daily battle with embedded and entrenched systems.

What do you believe in? What are you really after? How do you make sure the answers to these questions show up in your work?

You need tools to navigate the sea of change. You need the advice of a teacher, the encouragement of a friend, the hard-won knowledge of your own experience, the wisdom of a guru, the challenge of a goal. Some compass to carry with you on the crowded path of living. You need a manifesto to recruit yourself into exercising your power as a creator and change maker. To filter the signal from the noise. To know—not just what you can do but what you should do, what you must do, and how to do it.

What do you believe in? What are you really after? How do you make sure the answers to these questions show up in your work?

What makes the tuning fork of your soul tremble with recognition? What resonates? What rings true? Seize it. Save it. Test it. Work it. When you are right, celebrate your victory. When you are wrong, change your assumptions.

You can write it in tiny print on a laminated card and keep it in your wallet. You can wheat paste it onto public buildings. You can tattoo it on your body. You can print it on T-shirts. You can write it as prose, poem, or song. You can borrow the words or breathe out your own. But have one. **Start one. Right now.**

INSPIRATION COMES FROM THE OUTSIDE

You are going to begin creating a manifesto of your own by borrowing wisdom—deliberately looking for manifestos, guidance, prescriptions, and other texts written by people who have gone through their own process to distill wisdom out of their experiences. You will use these sources as the base material for creating an understanding of your own attitudes.

The roots of the word inspiration mean to “breathe in” or “to be breathed into.” I take that as a directive. When I’m most frustrated and stuck and stymied, I have to step back and take a deep breath, inhaling new information—mental oxygen—to change my perspective. Inspiration is often parodied as a eureka moment that arrives out of nowhere, without warning or preparation, to people who are somehow endowed with extra talent, gifts, or luck that you don’t have. But there is another type of inspiration that everyone has experience with, one that doesn’t require any special talent or magic moment: learning from others. You need oxygen to breathe and oxygen to light a fire. The inspiration you glean from others is your oxygen for this project, and the fuel you will use to get

rolling is other people's experience and wisdom. What a relief to know that inspiration is in the air all around us.

Many wise and wonderful people have found for themselves the same kind of guidance that you are looking for. You have access to vast sources of inspiration. People who have worked and experienced and synthesized and imagined and written down words to help you to understand something they themselves had come to know. These people have taken the time and effort to collect their work and write it down so that you could benefit from it. They published these works to get them out in the world, to teach and influence others.

It is your job to find them, to process them, to learn from the works, and transform them for yourself. You are going to **take these gifts with gratitude** and use their manifestos, statements of purpose, lyrics, essays, and more as a starting place for your own manifesto.

HONOR YOUR SOURCES

Where will you find all this amazing inspiration? Keep your ears and eyes open. Keep your self and soul open. You can collect wisdom from anywhere and inspiration from everywhere. How will you know it's the right stuff? It's what feels right to you, right now. Dig into manifestos from design, philosophy, social justice, biology, environmental science, business, law, art, medicine, fiction, food, religion, lyrics, poetry, lyric poetry, whatever floats your boat. You might be attracted to the person who made the piece because of what you know of their life or their work, or it might be the work itself that speaks to you. It could even be a situation that you want to capture. Maybe the text doesn't mean as much to you as the memory of the moment when you encountered it, when it helped you

crystallize a particular thought or idea or memorialize a moment of learning or of deep value to you.

When you learn from others, you take in the words, ideas, and examples they have offered, process them through your own experience, and create a new understanding for yourself. To make your manifesto, you're going to externalize that process, to make it happen on the outside of your head—so you can see it as it takes shape in front of you—and to make it easy to work with. And while you are free to find and learn from and use the work of others to create your own understanding, you have a responsibility to your sources.

Behind every source of inspiration that you find is an actual person: A real human who did the work to understand their world and save wisdom for themselves and others. That is hard work. Acknowledge it. Seek your sources; find out who they are or were. Explore their work and understand more about them. Reading is learning from teachers who are always there for you. Express your gratitude to them. Be authentic. Steal like an artist. Acknowledge and refer, appreciate and learn. Borrow from your sources with grace and reverence. Give credit where credit is due, and make it your own truth.

Behind every source of inspiration that you find is an actual person: A real human who did the work to understand their world and save wisdom for themselves and others.

GATHER IT IN

Although in theory you can find the raw material for your manifesto anywhere and everywhere, in practice it can be overwhelming and ineffective. Let's narrow the field. You're going to start with some concise statements, not too many of them, all of them written by other people.

Your task is to find ten inspiring sources of wisdom, guidance, and advice that appeal to you and apply to the work you do. Each one stands as an example of the collected wisdom of its writer or writers. These can be pointedly prescriptive and historical, like manifestos, pieces of professional guidance, statements of purpose, or open letters and essays. Or they can be more oblique and artful, like poems, lyrics, narrative fiction, or drama. This is your search, of course, so you should follow your own curiosity, but I'm not going to leave you without a few places to start. In addition to my own ten sources, here are a few things to consider as you begin your search.

HARVEST YOUR FIELD | First, look for work by people in your field that you admire. What are you passionate about? What are you studying? The list I use comes mostly from the field of design and art because those are fields I spend most of my time engaging in. But you should bring in the writers, leaders, researchers, artists, or whoever else is important to you.

GET OUTSIDE YOUR BUBBLE | Second, do the opposite. Try to go outside the bubbles of your field, your institutions, and your cultures and look around. Be interdisciplinary and expansive. Include material that is about life, fun, and play in addition to work, ethics, and commitments.

WHAT ARE YOU LEARNING? | Many of the d.school's teaching teams who run the manifesto project—yes, it's a class!—hand out a page of all the most recently taught concepts or takeaways for their students to incorporate into their manifesto, cementing their learning into a guide for new behaviors or mindsets. What is something you have been studying lately? Be it cooking or rock climbing, philosophy or statistics, pull in some of your most recently acquired ideas, skills, and advice.

Finally, be choosy. You'll cast your net wide to begin with. But in the end, you need to settle on the few pieces that you want to use, more than five but fewer than ten. Save the rest of them for a second, third, or fourth round. Your pile of primary sources should be compact enough to read through comfortably in less than an hour.

Seek your sources; find out who they are or were. Explore their work and understand more about them. Reading is learning from teachers who are always there for you.

MAKE YOUR SOURCES PHYSICAL | Many of your sources will be found as digital images or texts on the internet. Some may be from books or other types of media or material. To accomplish the next step, you need to get all of them onto pieces of paper so that you can harvest from them easily with a pair of scissors. Printing them out or copying them on

a copy machine works best, but if you don't have access to a printer you can capture what you need by hand-copying, writing, or drawing. When it comes to curating your work later, you might choose to use a digital medium to present it—cutting and pasting digitally can work if you are really familiar with those kinds of tools—but for most people, the more physical you can make it, the better it will feel.

If you need a kick-start, here's a list of sources that I have used for the manifesto project at the d.school. You can use these to begin your search for the raw material for your manifesto. My sources lean heavy into art and design, because that's what I'm most excited by. These are by no means the only sources of inspiration you should use to determine what you believe, but they are a place to start if you need one.

SOURCES I USE

Immaculate Heart College Art Department Rules by Corita Kent

An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth by Bruce Mau

Ten Principles for Good Design by Deiter Rams

Steal Like an Artist by Austin Kleon

Some Things I've Learned in My Life So Far by Stefan Sagmeister

The BlackSpace Manifesto by BlackSpace Urbanist Collective

The Design Abilities by Carissa Carter

An Introductory Ethic for Designers by Rick Griffith

Last Lemon Manifesto by Lisa Swerling and Ralph Lazar

100 Quotes by Charles Eames Edited by Carla Hatman and Eames Demetrios

SOURCES OF SOURCES

100+ Years of Design Manifestos, backspace.com, John Emerson
The Marginalian, themarginalian.org, Maria Popova
NITCH, nitch.com, Anonymous

When you take in new ideas, they spend some time mingling with all the information and ideas you already know. As your new information interacts with all those ideas, you develop a sense of understanding that is uniquely yours. Sometimes a particular statement can capture that unique understanding and give you rapid access to it in moments when you need it.

There is real power in a manifesto. What you say to yourself and others has an impact on the world. You can harness that power and turn it inward to influence and recruit your best self. 📖

Adapted from *You Need a Manifesto: How to Craft Your Convictions and Put Them to Work* by Charlotte Burgess-Auburn.
Copyright © 2022 The Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University on behalf of Hasso Plattner Institute of Design
All rights reserved.



Info



Ready to dig deeper into the book?
Buy a copy of [You Need a Manifesto](#).

Want copies for your organization or for an event?
We can help: customerservice@porchlightbooks.com
800-236-7323



Porchlight

Curated and edited by the people of Porchlight, ChangeThis is a vehicle for big ideas to spread. Keep up with the latest book releases and ideas at porchlightbooks.com.

This document was created on November 16, 2022 and is based on the best information available at that time.

The copyright of this work belongs to the author, who is solely responsible for the content. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License. To view a copy of this license, visit Creative Commons. Cover art from Adobe Stock.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Charlotte Burgess-Auburn is a designer, artist, and educator. With a background in production for fine arts and theater and experience at the MIT Media Laboratory, she has been the director of community at the Stanford d.school since 2005, where she also teaches classes on the role of self-awareness in creativity and design.

The Hasso Plattner Institute of Design, known as the d.school, was founded at Stanford University in 2005. Each year, nearly a thousand students from all disciplines attend classes, workshops, and programs to learn how design can enrich their own work and unlock their creative potential.

SHARE THIS

Pass along a copy of this manifesto to others.

SUBSCRIBE

Sign up for e-news to learn when our latest manifestos are available.