



Written by [James Murphy](#) on January 26, 2023

Cult Problem? Former XR Leader Admits She Saw People “Brainwashed”

While many of us have been saying that the climate alarmist movement is a cult of sorts, it is rare that a former leader in that movement confirms those suspicions. On Monday, though, Zion Lights, a former spokesperson for the U.K.-based climate activist group Extinction Rebellion (XR) claimed she witnessed “brainwashing” in the group and effectively referred to the group as a “cult.”

“I watched people brainwashed into pulling outrageous stunts in the name of ‘saving the planet,’” Lights wrote of her time in the group.



Leonhard Lenz/Wikimedia Commons

Extinction Rebellion, [you may recall](#), is famous for its large-scale protests. They first rallied at the U.K. Parliament in 2018, then moved on to shutting down traffic across bridges over the River Thames in London and occupied London intersections on several occasions, snarling traffic for hours. In 2021, the group called for “the largest act of civil resistance in U.K. history.”

A longtime player in the environmental movement, Lights first joined XR in 2018 and noted certain “red flags” almost immediately.

“At my first XR media training, I was instructed to cry on television. ‘People need to see crying mothers,’” Lights wrote.

She then explained what she was taught in her media training:

“[People] need to be woken up to what they should really care about.” They asked if I’d bring my children to climate marches for the same reason. The whole thing was a masterclass on how to manipulate emotions. We were instructed to bring everything back to the climate emergency and how politicians were failing us. Nothing about solutions or science.

Lights said she was once called by a friend into a so-called healing room to discuss issues within the movement. She was surprised when what she hoped might be an actual discussion on issues turned into something else altogether.

We were instructed to meditate and then connect to some higher power before sharing our feelings. There was a lot of talk about “oneness.” After about ten minutes of strange pseudoscientific practices, I left with another attendee. I wanted to fix problems, not pray.

What Lights called the “cult leader” was a failed organic farmer named Roger Hallam.



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“I didn’t see his appeal. His wiry gray hair was unkempt, and he sat behind his desk every day eating pungent homemade hummus. I noticed he didn’t pay attention to people when they talked. That we were facing certain death was his justification (or rationalization) for being rude to everyone,” Lights reported.

According to Lights, Hallam was a very influential voice in XR, despite really doing nothing as far as lobbying or proposing legislation to assist the cause.

That’s because Roger knows his followers—mostly young men and women—feel immense guilt about their carbon-heavy lifestyles. He preys on their guilt and their anxiety about the future. You could almost describe Roger as the leader of a cult.

Lights claims that Hallam often compared himself to Ghandi and Martin Luther King and described himself as a “prophet.” The spokesperson began to wonder at the ethics of the movement, at least as espoused by Hallam:

When a movement that bills itself as compassionate and democratic seems to rely so heavily on messianic figures trading in doom and gloom, you have to ask yourself: Is this really the most ethical way to change the world?

The beginning of the end for Lights was XR’s blockage of the London Tube in October 2019. When the group used an underprotected stop in a neighborhood of working poor families called Canning Town, many were blocked from going to work by the action. It was a protest that Lights found she couldn’t defend. She would leave XR eight months later.

While Lights has not gone full climate realist — she still believes there is a “climate emergency” — she has switched tactics and is calling for large scale use of nuclear power, which is truly the only feasible low-emissions option to maintain a working power grid.

While still a member of XR, Lights was asked on national television what the replacement for gas should be. “I wanted to say nuclear energy, but couldn’t,” she said.

Lights has since begun her own activist organization. Known as “Emergency Reactor,” the group [advocates](#) for nuclear energy as a low-emissions solution for what she still refers to as the “climate emergency.”

“Green groups: either back nuclear or back down. Either you’re against climate change or you’re against nuclear power,” reads a statement from Emergency Reactor’s website.

While Lights might be wrong in her belief that the world is facing a climate emergency, at least she’s attempting to offer a real-world solution to the problem. If greenhouse gas emissions are truly a problem, then nuclear energy would be the obvious solution.

Yet, radical environmentalists would rather hold on to a decades-long grudge against nuclear power than truly address the emissions they are clamoring about.

Light’s story kind of makes you think that the climate change movement doesn’t really have anything to do with solutions to so-called global warming. It’s more about trading in guilt and pseudoscience. It’s more about frightening people into believing that the world is about to end. You know, kind of like a cult.



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