

# *The Watchman's Rattle* Media Kit

# REBECCA D. COSTA

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## BACKGROUND

Rebecca D. Costa is an American sociobiologist and futurist. She is the preeminent global expert on the subject of “fast adaptation” and recipient of the prestigious Edward O. Wilson Biodiversity Technology Award. Her career spans four decades of working with founders, executives and leading venture capitalists in Silicon Valley. Costa’s work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *The Guardian*, and other leading publications. She presently hosts the popular news podcast, *The Costa Report*, along with 12 world renowned subject experts and also serves on the Advisory Committee for the Lifeboat Foundation along with futurist Ray Kurzweil and Nobel Laureates Daniel Kahneman, Eric S. Maskin, Richard J. Roberts and Wole Soyinka.



Costa was the founder and CEO of one of the largest technology marketing firms in California, where she developed an extensive track record of launching game-changing technologies. Her clients included industry innovators such as Hewlett-Packard, Apple Computer, Oracle, Siebel Systems, General Electric, 3M and others. She has been on the forefront of technological and scientific innovation, assisting venture capitalists and large corporations to identify, fund and launch disruptive new trends.

Retiring at the zenith of her career in Silicon Valley, Costa spent six years researching and writing the international bestseller *The Watchman’s Rattle: A Radical New Theory of Collapse*. Her follow-on book, titled *On the Verge* was introduced in 2017 to critical acclaim, shooting to the top of Amazon’s #1 New Business Releases. The success of *The Watchman’s Rattle* led to a popular weekly radio program called *The Costa Report* which was syndicated throughout the United States by the Genesis Communications Network until 2018. In 2020, *The Costa Report* radio program was converted to a subscription-only in-depth news podcast.

Owing to global pressures to respond more rapidly and efficiently to the accelerating pace of change, Costa is a popular international speaker. She brings both an evolutionary biologist and technologist’s perspective to the subject of adaptation. Costa is currently represented by the American Program Bureau and the Scott Meredith Literary Agency.

A global thinker in the mold of Alvin Toffler, Jared Diamond, Ray Kurzweil and Thomas Friedman, Costa attributes her ability to see the “big picture” to her cross-cultural education and upbringing. Raised in Tokyo, Japan, and Vientiane, Laos, during the Vietnam conflict, Costa brings a unique global perspective to the everyday challenges of work and life. Rebecca Costa is an alumnus of the University of California at Santa Barbara and currently resides in Astoria, Oregon.

For more information about Rebecca Costa visit [www.rebeccacosta.com](http://www.rebeccacosta.com)

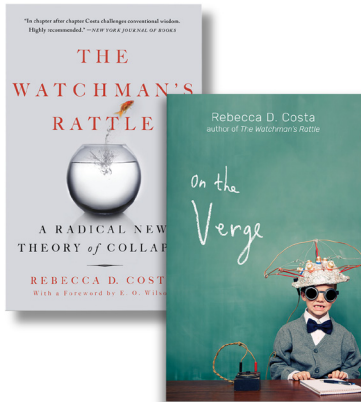


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# THE COSTA GROUP, INC.

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## Publishing

- International Bestseller, *The Watchman's Rattle*, released 2010
- *On the Verge*, released 2017
- Print, Audio, E-books
- Syndicated Column: THE FIX
- Represented by the Scott Meredith Literary Agency



## Consulting

- Building Fast-adapting, Innovative Cultures
- Technology and Science Reconnaissance



## Speaking

- Popular Public Speaker: Fortune 500 Companies, Education, Government and Nonprofit Organizations
- Represented by the American Program Bureau
- Podcast: *The Costa Report*

## WELCOME TO THE COSTA GROUP

*The Costa Group, Inc.*, was founded by sociobiologist and technology and science futurist, Rebecca D. Costa, to study the relationship between advances in technology and science, human evolution, and public policy. Costa is an award-winning, world-renowned expert on “fast adaptation” techniques in rapidly changing, complex environments.

*The Costa Group, Inc.*, is nonpartisan – beholden to no special-interest groups or business sponsors. One hundred percent of the company’s funding is derived from the sale of books, speaking fees, consulting and the podcast program.

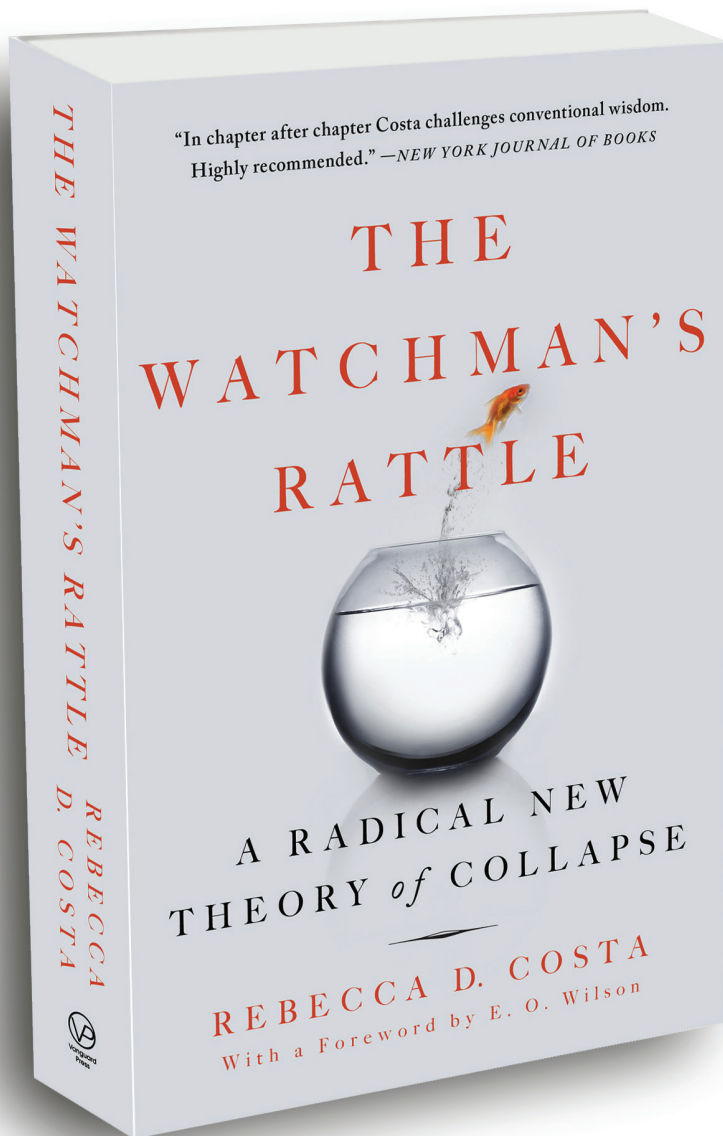
The organization is comprised of three business units: Publishing, Consulting, and Speaking. *Costa Publishing* oversees the print, audio and e-books authored by Rebecca Costa, as well as Costa’s syndicated column, THE FIX. *Costa Speaking* is responsible for managing the public and private appearances and podcast of Rebecca Costa. *Costa Consulting* offers assistance to small and large organizations interested in building adaptive, innovative cultures which keep pace with changing technology and science. Together, the three business units offer an international platform aimed at helping individuals and organizations stay ahead of disruptive change.



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# “One of the Most Critically Acclaimed Books of the Decade”



Why can't we solve our problems anymore? Why do threats such as an intractable global recession, terrorism, climate change, pandemic viruses, and illegal immigration suddenly seem unstoppable? Are there limits to the kind of problems that humans can solve?

Rebecca Costa confronts and offers a solution to these questions in this page-turning book that traces a recurring pattern of gridlock, from the Mayan, Khmer and Roman civilizations to headlines ripped from today's news.

*The Watchman's Rattle* offers a riveting look at why leaders, corporations and nations eventually stumble, and what we must do to kick-start progress again.

If you read only one book this year, make this the one.



Gridlock



Evolutionary Obstacles



Leadership

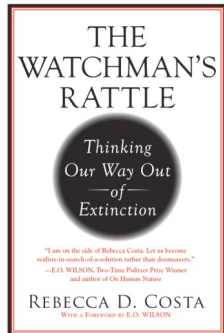
## On sale NOW at all major book stores.

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## ABOUT THE BOOK: An interview with the author of *The Watchman's Rattle*, Rebecca D. Costa



**Q: First off, let's talk about why the book is called *The Watchman's Rattle*?**

RC: In earlier times, the first guards and police were people known as *Watchmen*. They patrolled lighthouses, battleships and neighborhoods at night, but instead of weapons, they carried rattles designed to make a sharp, loud sound which summoned others for help. I view the book as a call for help.

**Q: What do you mean by *help*?**

RC: We live in a time when large, threatening problems are looming. These problems are extremely complex and we have not been able to resolve them for many generations. It does not matter if you believe our greatest threat is pandemic virus, climate change, terrorism, or nuclear proliferation. We can all agree, that eventually, one of these problems is going to have catastrophic consequences.

**Q: Are you implying we're doomed to collapse?**

RC: No, not at all. But when we examine earlier civilizations, such as the Mayans, Romans, Khmer, Byzantine and Ming societies, a clear pattern emerges. They all experienced gridlock when the magnitude of the problems they needed to solve exceeded their abilities. In other words, they hit some cognitive threshold where they could no longer understand or manage their biggest, most dangerous issues. They then began passing these problems from one generation to the next as the size and strength of the threats grew. But it doesn't have to go that way.

**Q: What causes this to happen?**

RC: I am always surprised at how people react when I point out the uneven rate of change between how slowly evolution moves and the rate at which humans create new technology, processes, institutions, laws, and make new discoveries. One requires millions of years and the other occurs in pico seconds. Eventually, there's a gap between how fast our brains can evolve new capabilities and the complexity we must process to survive.

**Q: How long will it take for the brain to catch up to the rate at which we manufacture complexity?**

RC: Well, the last big leap our brains made occurred about four million years ago when we discovered two-legged locomotion. Our prefrontal cortex grew quickly in order to process an avalanche of new sensory input which occurred when we could suddenly see and smell enemies miles away. Today the prefrontal cortex represents about a third of the human brain. But you have to understand that 4 million years was so fast biologists started calling this a "special event" in evolution. When you contrast that rate of change to how fast we make scientific discoveries, how fast we produce new technologies, it's obvious somewhere along the line the biological capabilities of the brain are going to fall behind the rate at which complexity is being generated.

**Q: Are there signs the brain is falling behind?**

RC: Good question. Well, the first symptom, as we've discussed, is gridlock. We become unable to solve our most threatening problems. We know what they are, and we have a lot of ideas on how to solve them, but we can't seem to act on what we know. So these problems become inherited by each generation. Historically, this stage of paralysis has been followed by a period when we begin substituting beliefs for knowledge.

**Q: So, once we become gridlocked we start pursuing beliefs? What do you mean by *beliefs*?**

RC: Since the beginning of time humans have been organisms which require BOTH beliefs and knowledge. By beliefs, I mean unproven ideas about the world. Beliefs are easy. You either accept them or you don't. But the acquisition of knowledge is pricey. You have to prove a fact is true then replicate, test, assess, interpret, process, learn, apply, etc. Put simply, when complexity makes it difficult, or impossible, to acquire facts we revert to unproven beliefs. Take the Mayans for example. They knew about drought conditions for thousands of years. It's the reason they built massive reservoirs and intricate underground cisterns for storing water. But over time, as drought conditions worsened and food shortages, disease and starvation became a reality, they stopped trying to solve their drought problems with practical measures and turned exclusively to sacrifice and rituals. There's evidence the worse the drought got, the more aggressive sacrifice became, until eventually, they began torturing women and finally, infants. Their beliefs grew so strong they thwarted any pursuit of knowledge – which in this case meant practical, man-made solutions.

**Q: Do you see parallels between modern society and what happened to the Mayans?**

RC: Yes, actually I do. I think we can all agree that we have been experiencing some kind of paralysis in terms of being able to solve our most dangerous problems. People everywhere want to know why we can't fix the global recession, a broken healthcare and education system, and whether terrorism and global warming are going to continue to grow. It's pretty obvious we have been going through the gridlock stage earlier advanced societies encountered. So the next stage we would look for is the substitution of beliefs for knowledge. My favorite example of this is Bernie Madoff. It turns out, the people who trusted Madoff with their money were really sophisticated investors. These were people familiar with finance and had been in the market for decades. But the U.S. financial system had become so complex, even sophisticated investors could no longer understand it. You had people like the heads of Citibank admitting that they no longer understood how their organizations were making money. So, when Madoff came along and said "That's okay, you don't have to understand it because I will understand it *for you*," they did what anyone overwhelmed by complexity does: they followed a false prophet.

**Q: What happens after the gridlock and beliefs stage?**

RC: In a word: collapse. Eventually, one of the unresolved problems inherited generation after generation catches up to us. Think about it this way: problems you don't fix don't go away and they also never stay the same size. They grow with each inheritance. Over time they become so large they cannot be stopped.

**Q: Is there anything we can do?**

RC: Of course! I know speaking about a pattern of collapse sounds negative but *nothing* in life is inevitable. The good news is once we become aware of a pattern we can act to avoid it. The first thing we need to do is acknowledge the gridlock and belief stages and guard against them. The second thing we can do is mitigate and buy time until our brains have a chance to catch up. The third is to cultivate evolution's cognitive gift to us: *Insight*.

**Q: What's Insight and why do you call it "evolution's gift"?**

RC: Insight happens when we encounter a really complex problem which exceeds the abilities of traditional left and right brain thinking. Most problem solving we do day in and day out uses left brain rational thinking or right brain synthesis. These are the methods of problem solving we have been evolving for the past four million years. But every once in a while we come across a problem which is simply too hard. Sometimes, not often, a brilliant answer seems to effortlessly drop out of thin air. We can't trace the steps leading to the answer so we have no idea how we arrived at it. Neuroscientists call this an "Aha" moment after Archimedes who discovered displacement when he climbed into a bathtub and watched the water spill over the edges. Insight is a spontaneous organization of chaos and seems to have something to do with an area of the brain called the STG which lights up like a Christmas tree when Insight is being used. Thanks to modern MRI technology we can now see Insight at work. We can even predict when it is going to be deployed about 300 milliseconds beforehand.

Insight is being used. Thanks to modern MRI technology we can now see Insight at work. We can even predict when it is going to be deployed about 300 milliseconds beforehand.

**Q: Is Insight something new?**

RC: Insight represents a cognitive response to complexity. Okay, so it's random and we can't control or manage this way of thinking yet – but look how long it took us to develop the prefrontal cortex to this point. Any evolutionary change in cognitive processing is going to first appear randomly and infrequently – and then, over millions of years, become just as commonplace as left and right brain problem solving is today. This is how adaptation and mutation works. Human's are developing a third way to solve highly complex problems and that method is *Insight*.

**Q: Are you saying Insight can help us avoid social collapse?**

RC: Remember that the stages of gridlock and relying on beliefs are *caused* by the uneven rate of change in evolution and complexity. If we can help the brain catch up to complexity, gridlock can be broken and the danger of substituting beliefs for knowledge is completely avoided. In other words, the key to avoiding collapse is to increase our brain's ability to manage complexity.

**Q: Can we increase Insight? I thought Insight was evolving - are you suggesting we can make it evolve faster?**

RC: Neuroscientists today are uncovering the conditions which allow Insight to thrive. For example, we know that walking on uneven surfaces gives the brain a really good workout and facilitates opportunities for Insight. We know that taking breaks, moving around, relaxation also play a big role. But the Holy Grail seems to be the early results we are seeing from brain fitness programs from people like Dr. Michael Merzenich, a leading neuroscientist at UCSF's Keck Center. It turns out, just like stretching before you start a race, the brain wants to be "tuned up" before we load it with content. This is what brain fitness does – it prepares the brain to learn.

**Q: So, if I understand you correctly, half the cure is becoming aware of the discrepancy between how fast evolution moves and how fast humans generate change and how this gap leads to gridlock and beliefs. And the other half of the cure is creating conditions for Insight to flourish.**

**Do I have that right?**

RC: Exactly. A world designed to encourage Insight, and discourage decisions based on unproven beliefs, would have juries and boards of directors of 3, 4 and 5 people – the group size most conducive for Insightful thinking. We would make certain foods which help cognitive processing like blueberries very inexpensive, or free, and high-calorie foods associated with obesity very expensive.

**Q: As we learn more about Insight and how it works do you see a lot of changes in store for us?**

RC: I see that we are on the cusp of the fourth great step in the evolution of the human organism. First from single cells to multiple cells. Then from water to land. Much later to two-legged locomotion and the rapid development of the frontal cortex. And now the rapid development of insight: an efficient way to solve massively complex problems and assure our survival.

# PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

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American sociobiologist, Rebecca D. Costa, has been featured in *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and other acclaimed periodicals and is a frequent radio and television guest.



"Like Jared Diamond and Malcolm Gladwell, Rebecca Costa attacks her subject from multiple angles, using research from unexpected sources to present a compelling argument with memorable examples."

**guardian.co.uk**

"Costa offers an unexpectedly hopeful conclusion: we may never really understand how to get what we want, or stave off the very worst - yet we may manage it anyway."

**new york journal of books**

"This is an excellent book, rich with challenging thoughts as well as perceptive solutions. Highly recommended."

**The Harvard Crimson**

*The Watchman's Rattle* explores current problems plaguing society - from economic recession to global warming - and why we seem unable to resolve them."

**The New York Times**

**"Who Will Be Oprah's Last Star?"**

"Like most authors, Rebecca D. Costa - who wrote *'The Watchman's Rattle, A New Theory of Radical Collapse'* (Vanguard Press, October 2010) - wants to get her book into Ms. Winfrey's hands. So far Ms. Costa, a sociobiologist in San Francisco, has received testimonials from other bigwigs including Donald J. Trump, Trudie Styler, the actress and wife of Sting; Tina Brown, the founder of *The Daily Beast* and former editor of magazines including *Vanity Fair* and *Talk*; the former senator Bill Bradley; and Sir Richard Branson, the billionaire founder of the Virgin Group."



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# PRAISE FOR THE WATCHMAN'S RATTLE

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"A riveting examination of our world's most dire and complex issues. A must read!"

**DONALD TRUMP,**  
real estate developer, entrepreneur,  
and television personality

"One of those rare books that one picks up, and then knows within the first few pages, is extremely important... brave, spirited and well-informed."

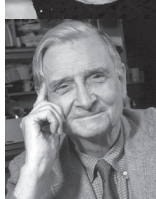
**SIR RICHARD BRANSON,**  
adventurist and Founder/CEO  
of the Virgin Group.

"Understanding this book is a big step toward becoming the master of our own destiny."

**SENATOR BILL BRADLEY,**  
three-term United States Senator,  
Rhodes Scholar, Hall of Fame basketball  
player and author.

"One of the most fascinating books I've had come across my desk in a long time – a book a whole lot of people are talking about."

**TAVIS SMILEY,**  
host of PBS Tavis Smiley Show and  
The Tavis Smiley Radio Show.



"Problems eventually become too complex for the average intelligence - in *The Watchman's Rattle*, Rebecca Costa depicts the challenges this presents."

**DR. JAMES WATSON,**  
Nobel Laureate discovered the  
double helix structure of DNA.

"Costa has pointed a way forward for all of us."

**TINA BROWN,**  
Editor-In-Chief of  
The Daily Beast, columnist, talk show  
host, and former editor of Vanity Fair  
and The New Yorker.

"A salutary warning against inaction, lazy thinking and partisan politics, *The Watchman's Rattle* should be compulsory reading for world leaders at this crisis point in our existence."

**TRUDIE STYLER,**  
actress, producer, founder of  
The Rainforest Fund and  
wife of musician, Sting.

"I'm on the side of Rebecca Costa ... In *The Watchman's Rattle*, she presents a view of the parlous human condition with which I completely agree."

**DR. EDWARD O. WILSON,**  
world-acclaimed naturalist, two-time  
Pulitzer Prize winner, and heralded as one  
of *Time Magazine's* 25 most influential  
people in America.



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# RAVE REVIEWS FOR REBECCA COSTA

From Fortune 500 companies to government agencies, non-profit organizations and universities, Costa is consistently ranked as one of the top speakers in the nation.

**"Important, Formidable and Absolutely Essential"**

**"Engaging, Humorous and Thought-provoking"**

**"Provocative and Entertaining"**

**"The presentation was outstanding** and we received rave reviews—the attendees wished your session could have been longer!"

- Alison Keller, National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO)

**"Rebecca hit the mark!** She helped us gain new perspectives on how we can better deal with the growing complexity businesses face today."

- K. Hansen, Senior Vice President, Dole Food Company

**"After being in the industry for almost 40 years,** I attend a lot of presentations. Normally I attend, I listen and leave and nothing changes. Your presentation was different. It really made me stop and think about our business in a different light."

- John Landgraf, Executive Vice President, Abbott Nutrition

**"We had more feedback from your seminar** than from any of our previous sessions. Thank you for kicking some doors in."

- James Cameron, Vice President, Walmart

**"Rebecca Costa blew us away** with her socio-biological explanation of how our complex environment drives humans into gridlock and indecision. She artfully connects the dots from genetics to complexity to evolution to gridlock."

- T. G. Lewis, Executive Director, Center for Homeland Defense and Security

**"Throughout her presentation she linked scientific data** to the day-to-day challenges communities face and then led us to practical solutions. Her style of presentation was engaging, humorous and thought-provoking."

- P. Kestner, President, Council of Community Services



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