

POWERFUL IDEAS,  
PRACTICAL ACTIONS

Costa Rica's Secrets to Happiness

# yes!

WINTER 2010

37 PAGES  
**CLIMATE  
ACTION**  
SPECIAL ISSUE

## Be a Climate Hero

ACT UP. ACT NOW.  
HOW TO BEAT DENIAL AND  
RESCUE THE PLANET

Green jobs for urban youth:  
**PHAEDRA ELLIS-LAMKINS** leads  
Green for All

Why a Clean Energy Future  
is More Likely Than Ever

Breakthrough Time for a New  
Climate Justice Movement

+ "No Impact Man's"  
10 Ways to Change Your Life  
(Not Just Your Light Bulbs)





**“THE STRUGGLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT  
IS THE STRUGGLE FOR OUR OWN SURVIVAL.”**

Ricardo Navarro,  
*founder of the Salvadoran Center for Appropriate Technology*

A 3-year-old Inuit girl  
fishes for Arctic char  
using the traditional  
method of fishing line  
wrapped around a  
length of wood.  
Victoria Island,  
Nunavut, Canadian  
Arctic, 2005.

PHOTO BY CHRIS BRAY





## There's Still Enough Time

I HAPPENED TO BE IN NEW YORK CITY IN SEPTEMBER on the day the Yes Men (no relation to YES! Magazine) pulled off their latest newspaper hoax, this one devoted to the climate crisis. All over the city, young people were on street corners hawking free copies of a phony *New York Post*, with a banner headline pronouncing “We’re Screwed!!”

Shortly after, the Yes Men held a press conference in Washington, D.C., passing themselves off as representing the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. They announced that the Chamber is dropping its “erroneous” opposition to climate legislation—a story quickly picked up as fact by major news outlets.

As news of glacial melts, storms, fires, and droughts gets more dire, the strategies of climate activists like the Yes Men are getting more creative and more insistent. The data coming in show actual climate impacts are at the worst end of the range of possibilities predicted by climate models.

Policymakers, however, are working from models that may be unduly optimistic—in part because they leave out the wildly unpredictable tipping points that historic climate data show can lead to rapid jumps of Earth’s climate to profoundly different states. On a crowded planet, where our food and water only barely meet the needs of billions, we are extraordinarily vulnerable to these climatic shifts. One estimate suggests that over the next 50 years, 1 billion people could become climate refugees.

Many policy observers say we are optimistic to think we can keep CO<sub>2</sub> levels below 450 parts per million (ppm), much less the 350 ppm NASA climate scientist Jim Hansen says is necessary “if humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed.” Instead, they say we must adapt to a world of extreme heat waves, spreading deserts, flooded cities, and mass extinctions.

We dispute that. The 2008 Climate Solutions issue of YES! showed how we can

avert disastrous climate change. These shifts do require us to mobilize ourselves beyond business-as-usual, but they don’t mean we have to give up on civilization. In fact, unless your definition of a good life includes a mandatory Hummer, you are likely to be as happy, or happier.

The question isn’t whether we have the off-the-shelf technologies, the proven policies, the funds, and the social stability to avert disastrous climate change—we have all that, and it is enough. The question is whether we can overcome the power of obfuscating corporations and anti-government ideologues, and their hired media and politicians to mobilize ourselves and our elected officials in time.

This issue of YES! Magazine reports on those who are stepping up to the challenge:

- The people who are taking direct action, risking arrest, building powerful climate justice movements across generations, national borders, and races.
- The people from the world’s poor countries and poor communities who are stepping up to help solve a problem they didn’t create—while insisting the solutions be fair ones.
- Those who are creating new, sustainable economies that provide livelihoods and meet our needs, running on renewable energy.
- Those pioneering ways of life that are deeply satisfying without requiring massive amounts of energy and “stuff.”

It’s going to take all of these efforts ramping up, plus technical know-how, design genius, smart policies, and global diplomacy to make the needed shift. This will not be easy, but what purpose could be more inspiring than saving the world? It beats the hell out of the alternative.

**Sarah van Gelder**  
Executive Editor



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Download your favorite Quote Pages from this and past issues of YES! Hang them up and share the inspiration.



# Climate Action

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LANE HARTWELL FOR YES! MAGAZINE

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### THE MISSION OF YES!

is to support you and other people worldwide in building a just, sustainable, and compassionate world. In each issue we focus on a different theme through these lenses ...

#### NEW VISIONS

Solving today's big problems will take more than a quick fix. These authors offer clarity about the roots of our problems and visions of a better way.

#### WORLD & COMMUNITY

New models that foster justice and real prosperity, and sustain the Earth's living systems. How can we bring these models to life and put them to work?

#### THE POWER OF ONE

Stories of people who find their courage, open their hearts, and discover what it means to be human in today's world.

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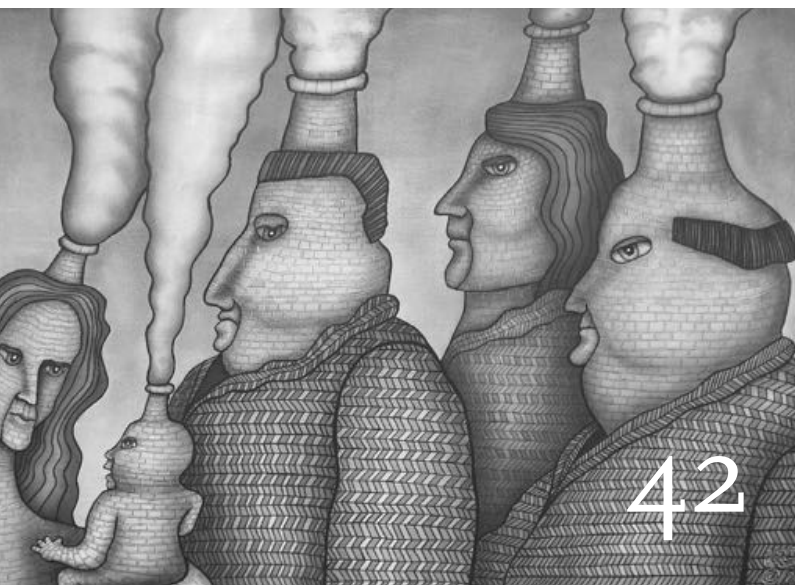


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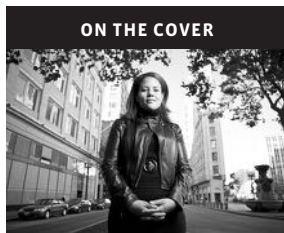
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PHOTO BY SUSAN HARDMAN

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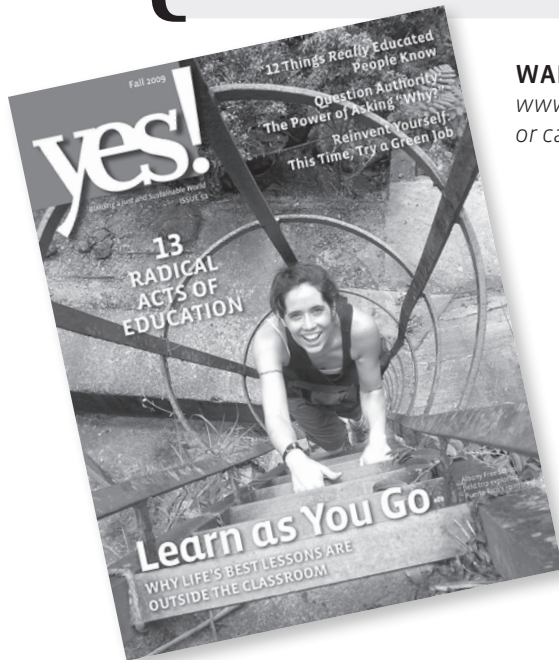
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**Tell us.** Send your response to an article, stories about making the world a better place, and ideas for connecting with readers to 284 Madrona Way NE, Suite 116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110 or to [editors@yesmagazine.org](mailto:editors@yesmagazine.org).



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### Learn as You Go

Imagine my delight in finding your story on Capacitar. I was privileged to travel with Capacitar several times in the 1990s. I still practice tai chi and several of the healing modalities.

Needless to say I was a changed person after the trip. Upon returning to Atlanta, I volunteered to work with men in transition from prison to free lives. I have a treasure trove of memories indelibly imprinted on my soul for life.

I had retired and moved to the country (I now teach English to Hispanic adults). I love nature and the simple life. I follow a slow-food lifestyle. I do not have a TV or computer. My life feels rich and abundant.

And my work jeans have an applique of a heart with YES! in the middle.

IRIS MOJICA ARIAS  
Alto, GA

### A learning community

You have no idea what great support your last issue is for me. Last August my son, a high school junior, told me that he was not going back to school—he was more interested in getting an education.

He has spent the last two months putting together an amazing learning community for himself with a little help from a local homeschooling program. He has sought out people to teach him art, English, sign language, and Latin. He is creating a comparative science class based on his interest in Goethe.

He completed his elementary education in a Waldorf School and it helped to forge the kind of person that doesn't confuse "busy work" for real learning.

As a fellow human, I was thrilled—as a mom I was nervous. Thank you for giving me the resources I need to be strong in supporting him.

LAURA BORAM  
Whidbey Island, WA

### Value public education

I appreciate John Taylor Gatto's radical approach to education, and his important view that education is most meaningful when students are active members of their community. I have no doubt that he was a phenomenal public school teacher.

But I disagree most vehemently that there is "a mismatch between what common sense tells you what [the young] will need to know, and what is actually taught," and that the great education he was lucky to receive "is missing in public schools today but still exists in many private schools." I am really disappointed to see this opinion reflected on so many pages of this issue of YES! To me, it sounds like a big "NO!"

Common sense tells me that young people need to be able to read and write well, and think logically and critically. This is exactly what they are learning in public school. To say that the best education is only available through private, home-, or unschooling strikes me as mighty elitist. For many young people, pursuing an education in public school is a radical act.

Public education is the foundation of a democratic society. It is not meant to teach you everything about life, but to ensure that all citizens have the tools—literacy and logical, critical, creative thinking—to function in society. Remember: all meaningful improvements to our system of education will take place within public schools, and to discount them flies right in the face of the YES! philosophy to build a just and sustainable world.

REBECCA MATTIS  
Barre, VT

### Van Jones takes the fall

I was of the opinion that Van Jones might not be able to do very much to bring about change by joining the Obama administration because



**HEY, LOOK!** THIS IS NO ORDINARY DULL WHITE PAPER WITH OCCASIONAL IMPERFECTIONS.





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Obama has shown that he does not want to make much significant change by the way he handled the financial crisis and by advancing the war in Afghanistan.

However, I didn't think that Obama would fail to stand behind Van Jones if he was attacked by the Republicans. When the Republicans were in power they forced the Democrats to accept many appointments that were bad. Obama is not going to win any points by giving in to the Republicans.

Obama has to start standing up for his people and his positions on issues such as health care. He needs to do whatever he can to defend himself and not give in any more than necessary to the very destructive ways of the people who

seem to control the Republican Party and who seem to want to prevent any type of reform in our government.

JIM TJEPKEMA  
Clarks Grove, MN

#### Break out of the cubicle!

I am an admitted paper pusher, a bookkeeper/office manager with a huge desire to do something more tangible.

I think the world has too many paper pushers, and most of us could best serve ourselves and the world if our offices closed down due to a lack of paperwork required. We would then be forced to do something more meaningful and motivating.

Do any other readers feel like I do?

MONICA DONLEY  
Sherman Oaks, CA

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**LOOK TO US DAILY:** Get the YES! perspective in real time, as news breaks and new possibilities emerge.

Interviews with everyday people turned climate heroes  
Costa Rica: life in the world's happiest country

Transition towns show how to take local climate action

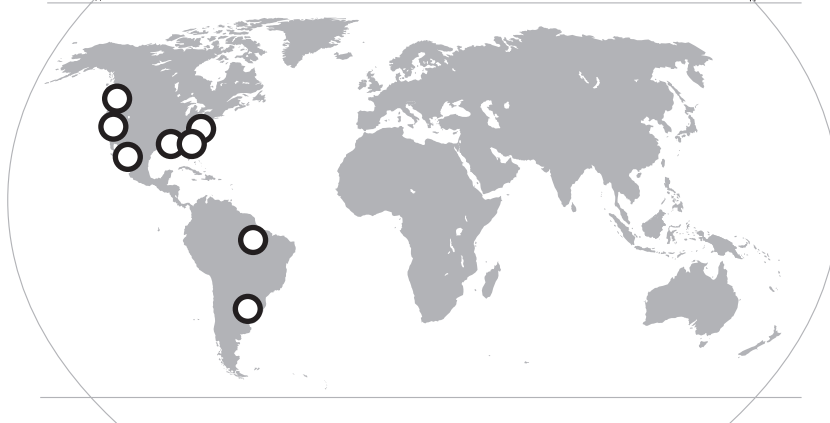
**ALSO:** Tried and true green living advice ... Must-see film picks ... Uplifting music ... Cartoon caption contest

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# Signs of Life

SMALL STORIES ABOUT BIG CHANGE



## ECONOMY

### Seeds of a Movement for the Unemployed

👍 For decades, labor unions have ensured that workers have sufficient power to bargain for their rights and for a share of economic gains. But where do working Americans turn when they lose their jobs?

As the economy struggles to recover, groups in Maine, Pennsylvania, and Indiana are mobilizing the unemployed. Led by committed organizers, many of them laid-off union members, the groups' work is reminiscent of unemployed activism that blossomed in the 1930s, and it could be an inspiration for a modern movement of the jobless.

In Indiana, the Unemployed and Anxiously Employed Workers Initiative (UAEWI) emerged as a direct response to the 2008 financial meltdown, and is now lobbying for a seat at the bargaining table of the North-east Indiana Regional Workforce Board. UAEWI says the Board has announced \$16 million for job retraining programs, but unemployed workers currently have no say in how the money will be distributed. "We are establishing a kind of bargaining

dynamic with the state ... so we can actually be part of that discussion instead of objects in the discussion," says UAEWI founder Tom Lewandowski.

The Philadelphia Unemployment Project (PUP) has been championing the rights of the jobless since the mid-1970s OPEC recession, but their work has taken on new urgency in the last year. PUP educates the

jobless on how to access state and federal unemployment compensation and pressures city, state, and federal governments to adopt policies like health care reform that will help those in financial stress.

PUP also represents homeowners facing foreclosure. In 2008, PUP organizers successfully pressured the city sheriff's office to stop the sale of

foreclosed homes. Their efforts led the Philadelphia courts to establish a program in April 2008 requiring lenders to participate in mediation with homeowners to seek new loan terms that will prevent foreclosure. The program prevented foreclosure among 80 percent of participating homeowners, according to an initial survey.

Another advocacy group,



PHOTO BY IGOR SMIRNOFF, IGORSMIRNOFF.COM

A Portland, Oregon, dry cleaning business helps out the unemployed, October 2009.



**“IF THEY’RE TOO BIG TO FAIL, THEY’RE TOO BIG ...  
IN 1911, WE BROKE UP STANDARD OIL—SO WHAT HAPPENED?  
THE INDIVIDUAL PARTS BECAME MORE VALUABLE THAN THE WHOLE.”**

Maine’s Food AND Medicine (FAM) has emerged as a prominent voice for the state’s unemployed since its founding in 2002. FAM lobbies extensively for the unemployed and offers them classes on how to organize and take political leadership. FAM also runs a food bank.

This fall, FAM’s membership voted to focus on Solidarity Harvest, a program providing hundreds of unemployed workers with locally grown Thanksgiving meals. The campaign garnered substantial press coverage, giving FAM the chance to broadcast its messages about joblessness throughout greater Maine.

The project also helps unemployed people realize they aren’t alone. “If you’ve gotten laid off, it gives you a little bit of spirit knowing that people are trying to help you out,” says FAM member Phil Polk.

None of the three organizations has more than a few hundred members, but each relies less on formal membership than on organizing among the populations they serve.

Lewandowski hopes their efforts can spread across the country, perhaps with help from Working America, the AFL-CIO’s community outreach affiliate.

“Working America has been extremely encouraging for us and really engaged in the experimentation we are doing,” Lewandowski says. “We’ve been beginning to look around to see if there are other places in the country that might want to take up a version of this model.”

Jake Blumgart is a freelance journalist and frequent contributor to Campus Progress and Publicola.

## FOOD

### Can Northeast States Grow Their Own Food?

👍 How much of the food eaten in the northeastern United States could be produced regionally? The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced \$230,000 in funding to find out.

The grant was awarded as part of the USDA’s new initiative “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food,” which in its first week provided \$65 million in support of local and regional food projects across the country through the 2008 Farm Bill.

Food in the United States travels between 1,500 and 2,500 miles from farm to fridge, according to the Worldwatch Institute. Shipping food cross-country leaves a large carbon footprint and is becoming more expensive as transportation costs rise.

U.S. consumer demand for locally grown food is expected to rise from an estimated \$4 billion in 2002 to as much as \$7 billion by 2012, according to the USDA.

The Northeast food study will estimate potential crop production along the East Coast to determine where regional food production could meet current and projected demand.

Laura Kaliebe is a freelance writer based in Seattle.

## FORESTS

### Activists Wrangle Forest Victories from Corporations

👍 Fierce pressure from activists has led several major corporations to change purchasing practices linked to deforestation.

Kimberly-Clark, maker of Kleenex brand, now says it will manufacture all of its tissue products from “environmentally responsible sources,” such as recycled fiber or sustainably harvested wood.

The decision was a response to a five-year campaign led by Greenpeace, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and other environmental activists.

As part of the campaign, students organized campus actions against Kimberly-Clark, and more than a dozen colleges and universities removed the company’s products from bookstore shelves and bathroom stalls.

The campaign prompted shareholders to introduce

resolutions asking the company to make its fiber purchases more sustainable.

Greenpeace won a second series of victories after it released a report in June that linked rainforest destruction to cattle ranching. Just weeks after the report was published, the International Finance Corporation, the private lending arm of the World Bank Group, withdrew a loan to one of the world’s largest meat producers, Brazilian conglomerate Bertin.

In October, Bertin and three other major meat producers, JBS-Friboi, Marfrig, and Minerva, agreed to a ban on the purchase of cattle raised on newly deforested areas of Brazil’s Amazon rainforest, on indigenous lands, on protected areas, or on farms that use slave labor.

Shoe manufacturers Adidas, Nike, and Timberland announced they would cancel contracts for leather products unless the producers guaranteed they have no role in Amazon deforestation and are not using slave labor.

—Laura Kaliebe

T-shirt from the Greenpeace Kleercut campaign, which targeted Kleenex manufacturer Kimberly-Clark.





### ALSO ...



**Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva** has proposed banning the development of new sugar cane plantations in the Amazon rainforest and the Pantanal wetlands.

Sugar cane-based ethanol accounts for more than 20 percent of Brazil's transport fuel market, but the expansion of ethanol production has resulted in deforestation and labor exploitation. Brazil's Congress will vote on the proposal next year.



PHOTO BY JIM MCCARTHY

The Klamath River's Iron Gate Dam would come down under a new agreement.

## WATER

### River Restoration Ends Klamath Water Wars



More than two dozen environmental groups, state resource agencies, and tribes in Oregon and California recently reached a deal resolving more than a decade of water wars pitting farmers against conservationists and the fishing industry. The draft agreement, released September 30, would remove four Klamath River dams that affect more than 300 miles of salmon habitat along the Oregon-California coast.

The Klamath River once was the third most productive salmon habitat on the West Coast, but two of its original five salmon species are now extinct from the watershed, and one, the coho, is endangered.

In 2001 and 2002, farmers fought to overturn restrictions

on withdrawing water from the Klamath for irrigation, but the move left too little water for salmon and contributed to the deaths of tens of thousands of fish.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission refused to renew hydropower licenses for PacifiCorp, the Portland, Oregon, power company that owns the dams, unless the company built fish ladders and other structures that allow salmon to migrate. Even with such improvements, estimated to cost \$300 million, Klamath dams might have been denied California water quality certification. The stagnant water behind the dams frequently suffers from toxic algae blooms.

Steve Rotherth of American Rivers, one of the groups to sign the new agreement, says fish populations should begin to rebound within a decade of dam removal.

—Susie Shotts

### Philly Transforms Stormwater into Gardens

Philadelphia's Water Department has proposed a plan to transform not only the city's water system but the city itself. The plan would channel storm water through a system of porous pavement, rain gardens, green roofs, and trees.

Currently, Philadelphia's water system is a conduit for both sewage and storm run-off. The new landscaping would absorb excess rainwater and help prevent the city sewer system from spewing untreated sewage and pollutants into Philadelphia's surrounding rivers and streams.

The landscaping would cost \$1.6 billion and take several years to build, but if the EPA approves the plan, Philadelphia could become an oasis of gardens and greenery, with cooler temperatures, better air quality, and more jobs created from the project.

The green ideas included in the plan are nothing new, but

Philadelphia would be the first city in the United States to implement green stormwater engineering on such a massive scale.

Margit Christenson is a freelance writer based in New York City.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### Homeland Security Addresses Rights Violations



In October, the Department of Homeland Security announced reforms aimed at improving conditions for immigrants being held in detention centers.

On any given day, more than 32,000 immigrants—including children and refugees seeking asylum from political violence—are detained in facilities that resemble prisons.

For years, advocacy groups have conducted investigations, engaged in legal battles, and staged national vigils and pro-

## “YOU HAVE YOUNG ACTIVISTS AND GAY PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE CONVERGING ON WASHINGTON, NOT BECAUSE A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION TOLD THEM TO, BUT BECAUSE THEY FEEL THE TIME IS NOW.”

COREY JOHNSON, *activist and blogger for towleroad.com*

tests to publicize human rights violations in detention centers.

In 2008, for example, a report by OneAmerica found that detainees at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility in Tacoma, Washington, suffered from overcrowding, food poisoning, inadequate food, and poor medical care.

In August, the American Civil Liberties Union settled a series of lawsuits to obtain medical care and educational programming for 26 immigrant children held at the T. Don Hutto detention center in Taylor, Texas.

The Homeland Security reforms will place nonviolent detainees in converted hotels and nursing homes instead of jails and detention centers, increase facility oversight, and provide better medical training for detention facility workers.

Judy Rabinovitz, deputy director of the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project, says the reforms are encouraging, but “meaningful reform of the system must also focus on ... why they are being detained in the first place.”

—Susie Shotts

### MEDIA

#### In Argentina, Activists Celebrate Media Reform

After years of campaigning by hundreds of the country's civil society groups, Argentina is transforming its media regulations. As in the United States, the country's



PHOTO BY SAMIR LUTHER

On October 11, tens of thousands of people joined the National Equality March in Washington, D.C., the largest demonstration for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered rights in over a decade. The march was organized from the grassroots in less than four months.

media is controlled primarily by large corporations. A new law breaks up media ownership among commercial groups, non-governmental groups, and the government, putting two-thirds of broadcasting licenses into non-corporate hands.

Thousands gathered outside Argentina's Congress to celebrate the law's enactment. The bill has support from a number of prominent human rights activists, such as Nobel Peace laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel.

Media giants have threatened to fight the new law in court. Critics say the law targets Grupo Clarín, a large media outlet that has openly criticized President Cristina Fernández.

—Margit Christenson

### TRANSPARENCY

#### White House Opens Visitor Log to the Public

The White House has begun making its visitor logs publicly available on its website, reversing a Bush administration policy that kept such records secret.

“We will achieve our goal of making this administration the most open and transparent ... in history,” President Obama said in a speech announcing the change.

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Government calls

the move “historic.” The government watchdog group has dropped four lawsuits against the Obama and Bush administrations under the Freedom of Information Act, and Obama has met the group's demand for details of visits from coal industry and health insurance executives, and from religious leaders during the Bush era.

Judicial Watch, a group that challenged the secrecy of visitor logs under Bush, remains concerned that the log is not monitored by an outside group and that the policy change still allows the administration too much power to withhold names deemed “sensitive.”

—Heather Purser



## People We Love



**JACQUELINE  
CABASSO**  
*Working to Abolish  
Nuclear Weapons*

IN HIGH SCHOOL in 1969, Jacqueline Cabasso learned about the many consequences of nuclear energy and weapons.

She's spent the years since committed to anti-nuclear efforts and was among thousands arrested during a protest at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in 1983. The nascent Western States Legal Foundation defended the protesters; Cabasso has been with the agency ever since and is now its executive director.

Cabasso co-founded the Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons and was appointed North American coordinator of Mayors for Peace in 2007. Last September, she received the Agape Foundation Enduring Visionary Prize.

"I think it's important that we demand [abolition] even if it is a long shot," she says. "We need a large number of people asking for what they really want instead of a small number of people asking for what they think they can get."



[www.YesMagazine.org/nuclearbomb](http://www.YesMagazine.org/nuclearbomb)  
*The Bomb in the Age of Obama*



**OTANA JAKPOR**  
*Lobbying  
for Clean Air*

AT AGE 12, Otana Jakpor conducted a science experiment on her friends and took her results to the California Air Resources Board a year later.

She found that just two hours' exposure to an indoor air purifier diminishes lung function. The board added her research to its evidence, and approved regulations making California the first state to restrict ozone emissions from indoor purifiers.

Otana, now 15, attributes her interest to her mother, a severe asthmatic. Since she was a child, Otana has helped her mother and tried to figure out the causes of her condition. Today, Otana works for environmental justice and awareness.

Otana has presented her research at conferences as a spokesperson for the American Lung Association, and she's met with the head of the EPA and congressional officials to advocate national regulations for ozone emissions.



**LORRAINE KERWOOD**  
*Rebuilding Computers  
for the Community*

LORRAINE KERWOOD turned a computer-repair hobby into a community endeavor. She is executive director of Oregon-based NextStep Recycling, which provides computers and job training to disadvantaged and special-needs people, and sells refurbished computers and other electronics at two ReUse stores.

Diagnosed with autism in her youth, Kerwood taught herself how to fix computers in college. While a social worker for the Oregon Department of Child Welfare, she began refurbishing old computers for people who couldn't afford them, mainly her clients.

Demand was so high that in 2004 Kerwood quit her job and expanded her computer operation to a warehouse. NextStep refurbished 700 tons of electronics in 2008 and expects a 34 percent increase this year.



[www.YesMagazine.org/nextsteprecycling](http://www.YesMagazine.org/nextsteprecycling)

See NextStep Recycling at work



**BAHATI KIZUNGU**  
*Reporting  
for Children's Rights*

AFTER SUFFERING hunger and abuse as a child in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 12-year-old Bahati Kizungu believed joining the Army—and later, a militia group—was his only way to escape hardship.

While in the militia, he listened to a children's rights radio program—"Sisi Watoto," or "We the Children"—and learned about an organization that helped children safely reintegrate into society. At 15, he escaped the militia group, sought refuge in the demobilization center, and got an education.

"In the radio shows, they used to say that a child's better life was in books instead of a gun, and a pen instead of a bullet," Kizungu says.

Search for Common Ground soon recruited Kizungu to be a radio reporter for "Sisi Watoto." Now 17, Kizungu interviews children across the DRC and reports on children's rights issues, hoping to empower other children and reduce the abuse inflicted by adults.

COMMENTARY :: Rob Biko Baker

## LESSONS FROM THE ATTACK ON VAN JONES

I grew up in an era in which communities of color had been devastated by the loss of leadership. Crippled by the death, incarceration, co-optation, or expatriation of many of the civil rights movement's brightest heroes, much of the momentum that had been built in the 1950s and 1960s had been lost by the time the 1980s hit. And while it is rarely talked about, this loss of leadership has diminished our ability to effectively fight for change, even when communities of color potentially have the political power to demand sweeping structural transformations.

Of course, not all has been lost. All across the country, leaders born in the post-civil-rights era have been picking up the baton.

Van Jones is one the brightest examples of our generation's leadership. From his powerful oratorical skills to his impressive track record tackling issues like the intense unemployment and police brutality that plague urban America, over the last several years Van has inspired thousands of people from a diverse array of backgrounds to get engaged.

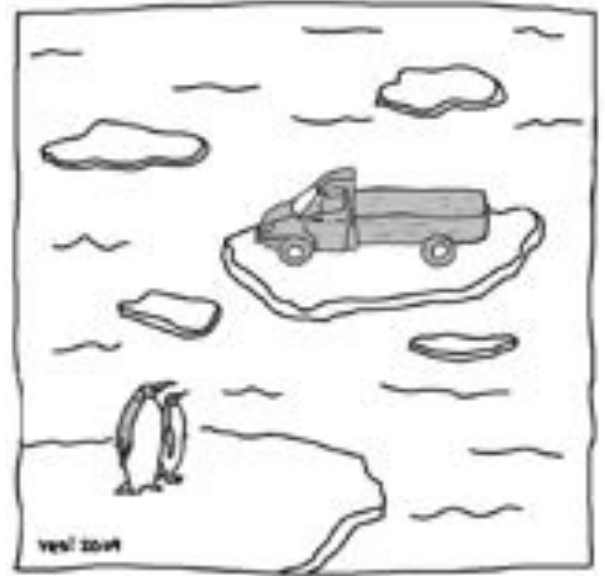
That's why I was so surprised when progressives did not respond more decisively when right-wing, conservative talking heads first attacked Van while he was serving in the Obama administration as the Special Adviser for Green Jobs. While I understand that no individual is bigger than any cause or campaign, I don't believe that we are in a position to let our leaders get undermined by right-wing ideologues.

The rhetoric coming from his attackers was completely contrived, but when we allowed the right to attack Van without raising our voices, we gave our opponents an opportunity to build momentum. By not protecting him, we allowed the right to prevent us from having a transformative thinker and leader inside the administration.

And that's exactly why Van was attacked. Like so many of our fallen heroes, Van has a rare ability to both build coalitions and challenge us to envision a world that does not yet exist. He was not attacked because of his political beliefs or because of his economic ideology. They attacked Van because he is effective at building a more equal and just society.

But we can't let them win.

We need to become more engaged than ever in pushing Van's message of eco-equality and clean energy at the



*Even if you could've reached the clutch,  
where were you going to drive it?*

JIM FOX

*Next time let's use the valet parking.*

JEFF NAWROCKI

*Think they'll listen now?*

MR. W



[www.YesMagazine.org/cartoon](http://www.YesMagazine.org/cartoon) for more reader captions

federal level, especially now, as Congress is considering climate bills. If we let this opportunity pass us by, we have truly let Van Jones down.

And more importantly, the next time someone attacks our leaders, we have to step up and say something. Don't be afraid to speak up and let the administration know that you aren't going to tolerate our leaders being picked off. Your emails, letters and phone calls can go a long way. Because we absolutely cannot let the right be the loudest voice in the discourse.

After all, our generation can't afford to let our leaders become martyrs. **Y**



**Rob Biko Baker** is executive director of the League of Young Voters, a national civic engagement organization that works to empower noncollege youth to become winners and players in the political game. Before joining the League of Young Voters, he used the power of Hip Hop culture, the written word, and technology to mobilize young people in his hometown, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

**Interested?** Van Jones is a former YES! Magazine contributing editor. Read his articles at [www.yesmagazine.org/van-jones](http://www.yesmagazine.org/van-jones)



# Why is Costa Rica Smiling?

This Central American country tops the world in happiness, peace, longevity, and environmental stewardship

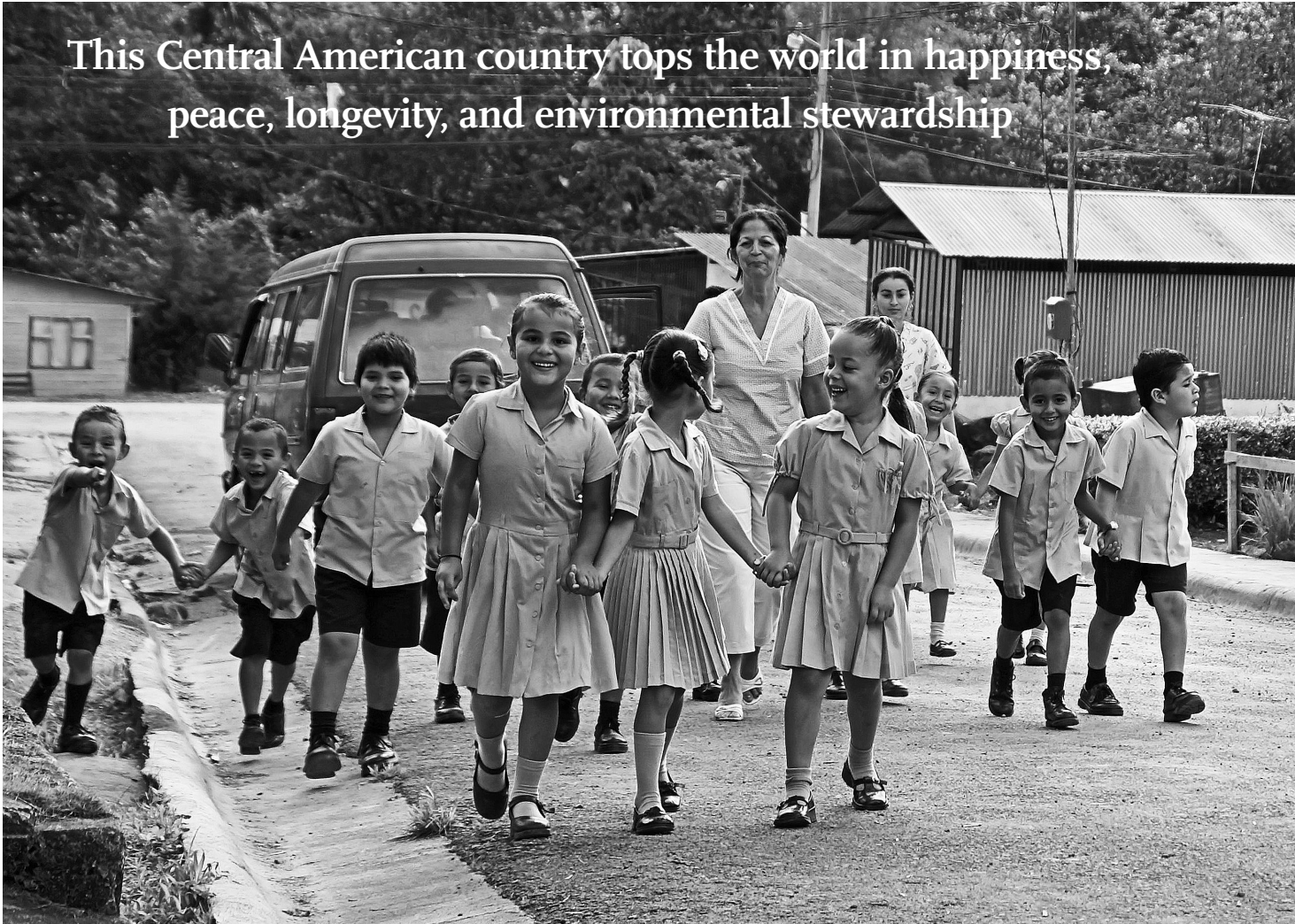


PHOTO BY SUSAN HARDMAN

The New Economics Foundation's Happy Planet Index determined that Costa Rica is the greenest and happiest place in the world. The HPI considers three variables: happiness, ecological footprint, and life expectancy.

**Lisa Garrigues**

A child growing up in the Costa Rican countryside is surrounded by some of the most beautiful and biodiverse landscapes in the world. The government of this tiny Central American country aims to keep it that way. But preserving this land of tropical rainforests isn't Costa Rica's only accomplishment. The government ensures all citizens have access to health care and education, and the country actively promotes peace around the world. So when the New Economics Foundation released its second Happy Planet Index, a ranking of countries based on their environmental impact and the health and happiness of their citizens, the No. 1 spot went to Costa Rica, population 4 million.

The United States' ranking: No. 114.



## WHO'S ON TOP?

Happy Planet Index

1. Costa Rica, 76.1
  2. Dominican Rep., 71.8
  3. Jamaica, 70.1
  4. Guatemala, 68.4
  5. Vietnam, 66.5
  6. Colombia, 66.1
  7. Cuba, 65.7
  8. El Salvador, 61.5
  9. Brazil, 61.0
  10. Honduras, 61.0
  11. Nicaragua, 60.5
  12. Egypt, 60.3
  13. Saudi Arabia, 59.7
  14. Philippines, 59.0
  15. Argentina, 59.0
  16. Indonesia, 58.9
  17. Bhutan, 58.5
  18. Panama, 57.4
  19. Laos, 57.3
  20. China, 57.1
- 
109. Chad, 34.3
  110. Lebanon, 33.6
  111. Macedonia, 32.7
  112. Congo, 32.4
  113. Madagascar, 31.5
  114. United States, 30.7
  115. Nigeria, 30.3
  116. Guinea, 30.3
  117. Uganda, 30.2
  118. South Africa, 29.7
  119. Rwanda, 29.6
  120. Congo, 29.0

Source: [happyplanetindex.org](http://happyplanetindex.org)



[www.YesMagazine.org/costa-rica](http://www.YesMagazine.org/costa-rica)

Visit Costa Rica through Susan Hardman's photos

What can our neighbor to the south teach us about happiness, longevity, and environmental sustainability?

"Costa Rica enjoys a privileged position as a mid-income country where citizens have sufficient spare time and abundant interpersonal relations," says Costa Rican economics professor Mariano Rojas. "A mid-income level allows most citizens to satisfy their basic needs. Government intervention in the economy assures that all Costa Ricans have access to education, health, and nutrition services." Costa Ricans, he added, have not entered the "race for status and conspicuous consumption."

Created in 2008, the Happy Planet Index examines sustainable happiness on a national level, ranking 143 countries according to three measurements: how happy its citizens are, how long they live, and how much of the planet's resources they each consume. The HPI multiplies years of life expectancy by life satisfaction (as measured by the Gallup Poll and the World Values Survey), to obtain "Happy Life Years," which are then divided by pressure on ecosystems, as measured by the ecological footprint. (The ecological footprint, in turn, measures how much land and water it takes to provide for each person.)

The Happy Planet Index "strips down the economy to what really matters," says New Economics Foundation researcher Saamah Abdallah. It measures "what goes in, in terms of resource use, and the outcomes that are important, which are happy and healthy lives for us all. In this way, it reminds us that the economy is there for a purpose—and that is to improve our lives."

Abdallah calls the importance of family, friends, and community "social capital." People who live in countries with higher levels of material wealth often report less happiness than people in countries with less wealth but stronger social networks. According to the HPI, a Costa Rican has an ecological footprint one-fourth that of the average person in the United States.

The United States is one country where social capital is falling, according

to a study conducted by the economist Stefano Bartolini.

"It is not surprising that social capital should be falling in the U.S.," Abdallah says. "Americans work the longest hours in the Western world and have the shortest holidays. All their time is spent making money, rather than building social bonds, which are just as important to well-being."

## The Importance of Peace

Domestic and international peace has long been a priority in Costa Rica. In 1948, the country abolished its military, allowing it to spend more on health and education. Its University of Peace, established in 1980, offers a master's degree in peace and conflict studies as well as ongoing workshops—like a recent one on corporate responsibility offered to international business executives.

In September 2009, the Costa Rican legislature created a Ministry of Justice and Peace, emphasizing the role of peace promotion and conflict resolution in preventing violent crime. Shortly afterward, the country hosted the 2009 Global Alliance Summit for Ministries and Departments of Peace, where representatives of 40 countries gathered to work on developing peace infrastructure in their own governments.

Central to Costa Rica's promotion of peace is the Rasur Foundation, which organized the summit and lobbied for the creation of the Ministry of Justice and Peace. Rasur is a teacher in a Costa Rican poem who tells a group of children, "Before directing the lightning in the sky, we must first harness the storms in our own hearts." Through its Peace Academy, the Rasur Foundation works with the Costa Rican Ministry of Education to introduce techniques of conflict resolution and "being peace" in Costa Rican schools.

Costa Rica's Nobel Prize-winning president, Oscar Arias Sanchez, who attended the Summit, is quoted on the Foundation's website:

"Peace is not a dream. It's an arduous task. We must start by finding peaceful solutions to everyday conflicts with the





# Why is Costa Rica Smiling?



WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA



» people around us. Peace does not begin with the other person; it begins with each and every one of us.”

Costa Ricans are not only reporting happy lives, they are living long ones. In the second measurement of the Happy Planet Index, longevity, Costa Rica scored an average of 78.5

of these zones generally eat well, get plenty of exercise, and have a genetic predisposition to longevity. Nationwide, Costa Ricans benefit from a combination of government-run and private insurance options. Costa Rica promotes good health among its citizens even before they are born, sending doctors

of land management, reforestation, and alternatives to fossil fuels.

Spurred by rapid deforestation of its pristine rainforests due to logging and agriculture, the country began converting parts of its territory to national parks in the 1970s and prohibited the export of certain trees. Even so, by 1987,

## THERE IS LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN LIFE EXPECTANCY ACROSS INCOME LEVELS, UNLIKE IN THE UNITED STATES.

life years, compared with 77.9 for the United States. Some studies have suggested that Costa Rican men live longer than men anywhere else in the world. There is little difference in life expectancy across income levels, unlike in the United States. Researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health have found an “enormous gap” in U.S. life expectancies, depending on race, income, location, and other factors.

Costa Rica’s Nicoya Peninsula is one of the world’s “Blue Zones”—places where the inhabitants frequently live to be over 100 years old. The residents

and nurses out into the countryside to provide prenatal care and teach parents how to raise healthy children.

### Protecting the Landscape

The Costa Rican government’s promotion of peace and health for its citizens extends to a peaceful and healthy relationship to the planet. The size of its ecological footprint indicates that “the country only narrowly fails to achieve the goal of ... consuming its fair share of the Earth’s natural resources,” according to the Happy Planet Index.

Costa Rica has pioneered techniques

illegal logging, cattle ranching, and development had reduced the country’s rainforest from 73 to 21 percent of the landscape. So in 1996 Costa Rica introduced the Payment for Environmental Services Program (PES). Oil importers and water-bottling and sewage-treatment plants now have to pay a special tax to do business in the country, while other businesses contribute via a voluntary carbon-offset fee. The money is used to pay local people to protect the trees, water, and soil in their surrounding environment by abstaining from cattle ranching and illegal logging.



PHOTO BY SUSAN HARDMAN

Far left: President Barack Obama greets Costa Rican President Oscar Arias during a reception at the Summit of the Americas in Port of Spain, Trinidad, on April 17, 2009.

Left: It may be the greenest country in the world, but Costa Rica still struggles with how a country that relies on corporate investment for economic survival can demand that those same corporations abide by the country's ecological guidelines.

The PES program has had mixed results. In some areas, cattle ranching and illegal logging remain more profitable, and the government has had to scramble to raise enough money to finance the program. But overall, because of the country's new environmental policies, including a massive UN-sponsored tree-planting program begun in 2007, more than half of Costa Rica's territory is once again covered with rainforest.

In a further effort to go green, the country has banned oil drilling within its borders and invests heavily in renewable energy sources like hydroelectric, wind, and geothermal power, which now provide 95 percent of its energy. In the capital, San Jose, vehicles are permitted downtown only on certain days, depending on the license-plate number. A planned commuter train will also cut down on automobile pollution. The country has pledged to go carbon neutral by 2021, the year of its bicentennial.

"The position of Costa Rica is that we all have to make ourselves present on the issue of climate change," said Gerardo Mondragón in a telephone

interview with YES! Magazine. He is with Paz con La Naturaleza (Peace with Nature), an advisory agency to President Arias on ecological planning. "We want to get the message out that all countries have to support one another in this, and in particular, industrialized countries should support those countries who have clear initiatives."

Critics of Costa Rica's green policy, like Rachel Godfrey Wood of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, have pointed out that no amount of tree planting can completely undo the damage done by fossil fuels.

The Costa Rican conservation organization FECON posts regularly on its website about continuing ecological problems in Costa Rica: deforestation by landowners, pineapple plantations that cause soil erosion and pollute community drinking water with pesticides, and a new mining development in Las Crucitas that has local residents worried about cyanide poisoning in the region. Another controversy recently erupted in a region called Las Baulas, where environmentalists fear development will threaten the turtle population.

"We have to go slow," Mondragón said of the environmental challenges still facing Costa Rica. "But we still have to let people know what's happening." He blamed the Las Crucitas mining project on antiquated laws that don't give Costa Rica enough protection from environmental damage by companies working within its borders. "We need to change these laws so that development can proceed in a balanced way."

As a stable democracy for the past century, Costa Rica has been considered a "business-friendly" country. Though large banana, pineapple, and coffee

plantations have not disappeared, ecotourism and high-tech companies have increasingly invested in Costa Rica.

But a recent struggle between proponents and opponents of CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement that passed last year, highlighted divisions over the issue of liberalizing trade laws. In one camp are those such as President Arias, who support CAFTA because they believe it will bring additional foreign investment; in the other camp are those who fear trade liberalization and privatization will allow businesses to be unaccountable to Costa Rica's labor or environmental regulations. The controversy over CAFTA illustrates an innate dilemma in Costa Rica's green strategy: How can a country that relies on corporate investment for its economic survival demand that those same corporations abide by the country's ecological guidelines? And what clout does it have in enforcing those guidelines?

No country, not even Costa Rica with its No.1 ranking, has reached the goal of "one planet living" that the creators of the Happy Planet Index believe we should all aspire to: consuming our fair share of the Earth's resources. "We want nations, regions, and cities to assess how well they are doing based on well-being and environmental impact," says Abdallah of the New Economics Foundation. "We would like to highlight the message that good lives need not cost the Earth and that 'one planet living' can actually mean a better life." 



Lisa Garrigues is a YES! Magazine contributing editor. She has written about Latin America for YES!, *Indian Country Today*, *Pacific News Service*, *Tikkun*, *elatico.com* and other media.



Number of people who walked past renowned violinist Joshua Bell as he played in a Washington, D.C., Metro station: **1,097**

Total haul for his 43 minutes playing six classical pieces: **\$32.17**

Price of a “merely pretty good” seat for Bell’s Boston Symphony concert three days before: **\$100**<sup>1</sup>

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Number of personal care products the average consumer uses daily: **9**

Number of unique chemical ingredients consumers are exposed to in those products: **126**<sup>2</sup>

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Number of articles on Wikipedia: **13 million+**

Number of languages used in Wikipedia articles: **260+**

Percentage of Wikipedia articles in languages other than English: **78**<sup>3</sup>

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Area, in acres, of a single *Armillaria ostoyae* (Honey Mushroom) mycelium in Eastern Oregon, the world’s largest living organism: **2,200**<sup>4</sup>

Weight, in pounds, of a single clonal colony and root system of *Populus tremuloides* (Quaking Aspen) in Southern Utah, the world’s heaviest living organism: **14 million+**<sup>5</sup>

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The average age Americans under 30 say old age begins: **60**

The average age Americans 65 and older say old age begins: **74**

The average age Americans say they want to live to: **89**<sup>6</sup>

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Percentage of Americans in May 1993 who favored allowing openly gay people to serve in the military: **44**

Percentage of Americans in July 2008 who favored allowing openly gay people to serve in the military: **75**<sup>7</sup>

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Percentage of all on-screen characters during the 2007-2008 TV season who were female, a historical high: **43**

Percentage of characters in their 50s who were female: **30**

Percentage of characters in their 60s who were female: **39**

Percentage of all characters who were females 40 and older: **11**<sup>8</sup>

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Approximate percentage of total U.S. health-care expenditures used for complementary and alternative medicine: **1.5**

Percentage of U.S. adults who used some form of complementary and alternative medicine in 2007: **38.3**<sup>9</sup>

Percentage of South Korean adults who used some form of complementary and alternative medicine in 2006: **74.8**<sup>10</sup>

---

Number of Boeing 747 jets that could be built with the aluminum cans thrown away by airlines in 2004: **58**

Height in feet newspapers and magazines thrown away by airlines in 2004 would reach if stacked on a football field: **230**<sup>11</sup>

Percentage of the 425,000 tons of passenger-related waste airports and airlines recycle annually: **less than 20**<sup>12</sup>

Complete citations at [www.yesmagazine.org/ptc](http://www.yesmagazine.org/ptc)

1. *The Washington Post*, April 8, 2007 2. Environmental Working Group, Oct. 5, 2005 3. Wikipedia 4. *Canadian Journal of Forest Research*, April 2003 5. U.S. Forest Service 6. Pew Research Center, June 29, 2009 7. *The Washington Post*, July 19, 2008 8. “Media Report To Women,” updated February 2009 9. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 30, 2009 10. The Korean Academy of Medical Sciences, 2009 11. Natural Resources Defense Council, November 2006 12. NRDC, March 2008

# CLIMATE ACTION

We need big change to hold global warming below levels that threaten human civilization and global ecosystems. Warnings from scientists are more dire by the day, yet carbon emissions continue to rise. There's still time, though, to fight denial, change our communities, get out into the streets, and save ourselves.



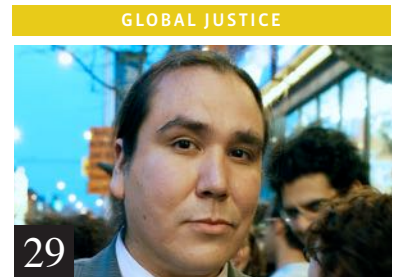
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**Act Up. Act Now.** *It's not too late to avert disastrous climate change. Here's what we need to do.*



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**Direct Action Heats Up.** *As the urgency of the crisis grows, so do the world's climate justice movements.*



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**No Fairness, No Deal.** *Activists from the Global South and indigenous leaders call for equitable climate solutions.*



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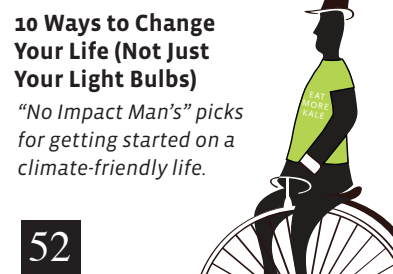
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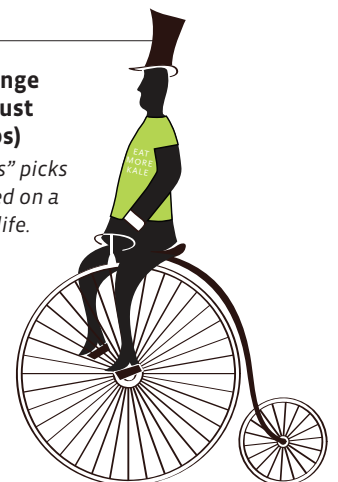
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**10 Ways to Change Your Life (Not Just Your Light Bulbs)**

*"No Impact Man's" picks for getting started on a climate-friendly life.*





# Act Up. Act Now.

**VIOLENT HURRICANES**—Category 5—in the North Atlantic tropical system occur three to four times more often than a decade ago.



PEETER VIISIMAA/ISTOCK

2005 was one of the busiest Atlantic hurricane seasons on record: 15 hurricanes formed, and four reached Category 5 status.

**IN THE NEXT 12 YEARS**, there's a 50-50 chance that major water sources Lakes Mead and Powell will go dry.



Lake Mead shrinks, exposing bleached banks. The Mead-Powell system supplies water to Los Angeles, San Diego, and Las Vegas.

Sarah van Gelder, Madeline Ostrander, and Doug Pibel

**F**or nearly any major disaster—natural, economic, or military—there was a moment when tragedy could have been prevented.

In just the last decade, experts warned that a subprime mortgage bubble could lead to financial collapse and that a hurricane could devastate New Orleans. But our leaders failed to head off disaster, and the public knew little until it was too late.

Now we face the largest potential Katrina the world has ever seen, an imminent catastrophe we refer to blandly as “climate change.” Neither your mayor, nor your senator, nor certainly, your president has declared a

climate emergency. But in the time since you may have watched *An Inconvenient Truth*, global emissions have worsened, and the scientific predictions have become much more frightening.

The carbon dioxide that we have already put into the atmosphere makes it a near certainty that our oceans will become steadily more acidic, eventually destroying coral reefs and sea life. Glaciers will continue to melt year by year, eventually threatening the water supply of as much as 25 percent of the human population. Sea levels are already rising, and will continue to rise for hundreds of years.

In many parts of the world, the

climate emergency has already arrived. An estimated 26 million people have already been displaced by the increases in hurricanes, floods, desertification, and drought brought on by climate change. In the North Atlantic, Category 5 hurricanes, the most destructive kind, occur three to four times more often than they did a decade ago.

While no single weather event can be tied directly to global warming, droughts, dust storms, and wildfires are becoming more common worldwide, and climate models predict that trend will accelerate. Southern California's worst wildfire in 30 years scorched 20,000 acres last spring. And in September, Sydney, Australia,

**26 MILLION PEOPLE** worldwide have already been displaced by the increases in hurricanes, floods, desertification, and drought.



PHOTO BY JONATHAN MUNSHI

Throughout southwestern Bangladesh Cyclone Aila flooded the land with seawater, leaving people dependent on relief supplies of food and water.

choked on its own version of the Dust Bowl: 5,000 tons of orange dirt swirled around the city during one of the region's worst droughts.

We're no longer talking about future generations; it's about us.

Why haven't our leaders responded? They have been relying on old, conservative estimates of global warming effects. The 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projections used baseline scenarios from the 1990s, when scientists and government leaders assumed that by now, popular and political support would have led us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That means politicians and the people they represent have been

looking at optimistic projections based on improvements that didn't happen.

In fact, global fossil-fuel and industrial carbon emissions have grown by 3.5 percent a year since 2000, faster than the worst-case scenario predicted by the Nobel Prize-winning IPCC. Atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations are now at their highest levels in the last 15 million years, since before humans walked the earth.

U.N. senior official Luc Gnacadja recently told the press that by 2025, 70 percent of the world's land could be suffering from drought. In the United States, a report by the Union of Concerned Scientists says that in just a couple of decades, average summers

in the country's bread basket, Illinois, could be hotter than the 1988 heat wave that wiped out \$40 billion worth of food crops. In the next 12 years, there's a 50-50 chance that a combination of climate change and overuse will dry up lakes Mead and Powell, say scientists with the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Mead and Powell supply 90 percent of Las Vegas' water, along with irrigation and drinking water for more than 20 million people in Los Angeles and across Nevada and Arizona.

The vast majority of scientists agree that if we keep the Earth's temperature from rising 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius) above pre-industrial levels, we have a fighting chance of avoiding the most civilization-shaking impacts of climate change. The G8 leaders agreed to that target at their July meeting.

Shoot past this limit, and the planet's ecosystems may enter a point of no return. We push the Earth into vicious spirals of feedback loops that make things even hotter. Sea ice melts, and the dark, open ocean absorbs more heat. The Amazon rainforest burns and releases even more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Weather patterns like El Niño transform from occasional to annual hurricane-brewing phenomena. Grain crops fail. One to 3 billion people face water shortage. The basic systems that support us, our societies, and life on the planet start breaking apart.

### **We have the wherewithal**

We have a choice to make. According to a consensus of hundreds of climate scientists, we can avert crashing the planet only if we make a sharp global U-turn by 2015: Level off emissions worldwide and bring them back down in the next few decades.

To do this, we must switch to much more efficient transportation, manufacturing, and buildings, and to solar, wind, tide, and biomass energy. Agriculture must make a rapid switch to organic and ecologically sound practices. The Worldwatch Institute >>



» estimates that livestock are responsible for more than half of greenhouse-gas emissions worldwide. We have to stop destroying forests for cattle ranches, palm oil plantations, and paper pulp, so we can preserve their ability to soak up carbon.

We need the world's governments to form ambitious and binding agreements at Copenhagen and beyond. These agreements need to regulate and put a high price on emissions, and create incentives for a transition to a clean energy economy. The agreements must include help for the Global South in making the transition to a green economy.

We can afford to do this. "The Economics of 350," recently released by the Economics for Equity and the Environment Network, says the cost of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> to 350 parts per million—the amount necessary to avoid a 3.6-degree temperature rise—would be between 1 percent and 3 percent of world GDP. It will cost far less than the 3.3 percent of GDP spent globally on insurance or the 4 percent-plus of GDP the United States spends on its military. And it will do more than either of those to increase our security.

Investments in renewable energy, building retrofits, and efficient mass transit will put people to work and create whole new industries, kick-starting an economic recovery that immediately benefits ordinary people.

The low-carbon culture we need to prevent climate catastrophe is not a culture of deprivation. We can move away from consumption for consumption's sake, gaining time to enjoy our lives more fully, and creating a world where our children and grandchildren have the opportunity to thrive.

### What's Holding Us Back?

Contrary to popular perception, the scientific community has reached a broad consensus that global warming is happening and that humans have caused it. So why has the United States been so slow to react to the warnings?

The misinformation sown by

### Americans are still unsure:

**36%** say in Fall 2009 there is solid evidence the Earth is warming as a result of human activity.  
**47%** said so in Spring 2008.

**65%** say global warming is a serious problem.  
**73%** said so in Spring 2008.

**23%** could identify that "cap and trade" legislation has to do with either energy or environment.

### But we are ready to act:

**75%** favor government regulation of greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, cars, and factories.

**59%** favor the U.S. taking action on global warming, even if other countries like China and India do less.

**41%** of those who believe warming is due to natural causes still support limits to climate emissions.

### We support policies that can get us there:

**75%** favor requiring developers to build more energy-efficient homes even if it increases prices.

**78%** ... higher mileage standards for cars, trucks, and SUVs.

**84%** ... investing in railways to make shipping more fuel efficient.

**78%** ... higher emissions and pollution standards for business.

### And we're ready to change our lives:

**78%** willing to cut back on leisure driving.

**64%** ... to have a 55-mph speed limit.

**44%** ... to use public transit.  
**40%** ... to walk or bike.

**60%** ... to pay more for electricity from renewable sources.

Sources: Public Agenda "The Energy Learning Curve," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, and ABC News/Washington Post Poll—all from polls conducted in 2009.

Go to [www.yesmagazine.org/climate-poll](http://www.yesmagazine.org/climate-poll) for full citations for this article.

industry-funded climate deniers, the lack of national leadership, and the chronic failure of U.S. media to report the story leave many Americans confused about what to think.

Then there's the convenient excuse that those of us in developed nations should wait until those in the developing nations, particularly India and China, agree to act at the same speed. That argument ignores the fact that the vast majority of the CO<sub>2</sub> currently in the atmosphere came from industrialized nations. U.S. carbon per

capita emissions are more than four times China's and almost 18 times India's. There's a fundamental fairness to requiring wealthy nations to clean up the mess we created and to help the poorer ones avoid making the same mistakes. More to the point, the nations of the Global South will only be able to sign on to an agreement that allows them to secure food and an economic future for their citizens. If the deal isn't fair, it won't happen.

## A Climate Justice Mobilization

How do we muster the political will to make the changes necessary?

The American people effectively mobilized in the buildup to World War II. When we faced a war emergency, we didn't take half measures: We converted automobile factories to tank factories and learned to recycle everything. The unemployed got jobs—even those previously excluded from the workforce, like women and people of color.

The war mobilization was the organizing principle of life, and many believe it not only got us out of the Great Depression, it also launched us into decades of sustained prosperity. Think about the sense of shared pur-

<b>71%</b> ... spending tax money on public transit.	<b>56%</b> ... prioritizing conservation and regulation on energy use and prices.
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pose that resulted from that mobilization, and you begin to see the potential.

Today, a 21st-century people's movement is building, motivated by the climate crisis coupled with the opportunity for a clean-energy future. Youth from rich countries are supporting climate justice for the poor. Scientists like James Hansen are risking arrest along with social justice advocates. Union officials are standing with greens.

Like other social movements that have changed our world, the climate justice movement is getting traction by taking the high ground. It is sticking to strategies that are nonviolent and inviting ordinary people to be part of creating a clean and prosperous world. And it is insisting on a fair shake for all the world's people.

## Economic Change

People are energized by the prospect of a green economy and new, clean technologies, and they want the

opportunity not only to avert a climate catastrophe, but to help build a better future. Seventy-seven percent of those polled by Public Agenda say "investing in creating ways to get energy from alternative sources like solar and wind" is the best way to get the economy going, while just 16 percent believe "investing in finding more sources of oil, coal, and natural gas" is the answer.

This excitement is especially evident among those who were left out of the last wave of economic growth and today are sidelined by the so-called "jobless recovery." Among the supporters of green jobs and clean energy are urban youth, steelworkers, solar developers, architects, farmers, and all sorts of people who see the prospects for a green economic recovery that actually puts people to work.

The climate movement is demanding action in Washington, but not waiting for Congress to act. Businesses are adopting green practices and walking out on climate-denier associations, like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (see page 42).

Workplaces, homes, places of worship, and schools are being upgraded to become more climate-friendly and less costly to operate. Communities are making serious commitments to reducing their carbon emissions, restructuring their economies, and making neighborhoods green, resilient, and inclusive (see page 48).

Buy-local campaigns are cutting down on long-distance transport and climate emissions. The strengthened local economies offer diverse livelihoods that meet people's immediate needs while weaving together the relationships that help people weather anything from an economic downturn to climate catastrophe.

## Cultural Change

From "No Impact Man" (page 50) to "The Story of Stuff," (page 34), a different idea about our way of life is taking hold. Simple living, green lifestyles, buying local are becoming mainstream. Large majorities are prepared to change

their lives to make a difference (see box).

We'll have to ramp up those changes to address the climate crisis in the time and at the scale we have available, and many Americans know that won't be easy; 48 percent of those polled by Public Agenda say reducing the effects of global warming will require major sacrifices.

No social movement gets everyone on board. But movements succeed when thousands change their attitudes and practices, and then speak out and influence others. A climate-friendly life is becoming "cool," even heroic.

In the old economy, the heroes were the ones who made lots of money even if it was at the expense of other people or the planet. The new heroes are those who defend the planet. They restore land that is degraded and poisoned, clean up sources of climate-altering pollution, rebuild soil, and plant trees and vegetables. And they aren't afraid to get arrested when it's time to take a stand.

Rebuilding our economy will mean more people will have meaningful work. A more frugal society means less waste, less time devoted to "stuff," and more time for things that make for genuine happiness (see page 50). And we can create well-being that isn't reliant on someone else sacrificing their own.

When we learn to live within our ecological means, we won't need to fight wars over resources like oil or water. Men and women in uniform can be redeployed to the critical tasks of restoring damaged ecosystems, coping with the inevitable natural and climate-induced disasters, and revamping infrastructure so it can withstand the coming storms.

## There Is Still Time

We can still avert the extreme droughts, floods, storms, and displacements that could result if climate change reaches critical tipping points. It's still possible to save ourselves and generations to come from a climate so unstable that it can no longer support civilization as we know it. But we can't leave it to our leaders to fix it; the possibility only exists if we rise up and act now. ●



A **21ST CENTURY PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT** is coming together. Young people are flocking to nonviolent direct action. Celebrities are speaking out. Scientists are coming out of the labs and onto the streets. The wealthy are speaking up for a fair shake for the poor. Union members and mayors, business leaders and urban activists are joining forces to confront the global emergency.



# RISE, PEOPLE

A BREAKTHROUGH SEASON FOR AN EMERGING  
CLIMATE JUSTICE MOVEMENT





PHOTO BY MATT LEONARD

At Climate Ground Zero Direct Action Training Camp in Montana, activists learn everything from tactical communications to creative campaigns, such as rappelling off rooftops for Greenpeace.



[www.YesMagazine.org/training-camp](http://www.YesMagazine.org/training-camp)

Photos from direct action camp

## Mark Engler

In early September 2006, Johann Hari, a columnist for the British newspaper *The Independent*, visited what was then an unusual gathering: a climate action camp. A village of tents had appeared in the shadow of Selby, England's, towering Drax coal-fired power plant—one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases in Europe. Hari found some elements of a counter-culture festival, but he also witnessed what amounted to an “open-air science seminar, where 600 protesters discussed climate chaos with a level of knowledge that would shame our news broadcasters.”

The camp was also a launching pad for direct action, culminating in an effort to temporarily occupy the power station. “These protesters,” Hari observed, “were tired of praying the world's scientists have made some unprecedented collective error, or waiting for a political Messiah to solve the problem.”

Like earlier mass movements in their infancy, the campers had plenty of knee-jerk detractors. The right-wing *Sun* newspaper dubbed them “naïve beyond belief.” Hari saw it differently. He pointedly asked in his column, “isn't the real naïvete coming from people like them who say we should just sit back ... and continue to drastically change the chemical composition of the atmosphere?”

Leaving the camp, he declared “the birth of a new protest movement to force action on global warming.”

Climate-change activism has been taking place in some form for decades, but in recent years the ripples created by events like the Selby camp have been swelling into something larger—something that is attracting ever-greater numbers of mainstream environmentalists, gathering support from top climate scientists and prominent public figures, and starting to look a lot like a mass movement.

This movement is set to produce a broad wave of dissent this fall in the United States and internationally, and it is not afraid to think big. “The Civil Rights Movement, the suffragettes, India's movement for independence. That's the sort of scale we need to be thinking on when we're thinking about

climate change,” says Abigail Singer, an organizer with the environmental group Rising Tide and co-coordinator of the Mobilization for Climate Justice coalition.

## A Global Uprising

While nothing of historic proportions has yet materialized in the United States, environmentalists elsewhere are providing impressive models for climate disobedience. “You've got activists in Italy doing multiple day-long sit-ins at coal-fired power plants that actually shut them down,” says Jennifer Krill, a forest and climate campaigner at Rainforest Action Network. “And in Australia you've got massive blockades of coal trains, as well as the coal plants themselves.”

Since Selby, climate camps have become recurrent events in the United Kingdom and have also popped up in Germany, Holland, Ireland, and Australia. They have made the names of major coal-fired plants, such as Drax and Kingsnorth, synonymous with militant protest.

And they've had an impact on policy. Public pressure compelled Britain's energy and climate minister, Ed Miliband, to rethink previous plans to allow plant expansion and declare in April that “The era of new unabated coal has come to an end.” Facing concerted opposition, the E.ON power company announced in October that it was shelving its plans to build a major new coal-burning facility at the infamous Kingsnorth site.

For activists from the Global South, the December 2007 U.N. climate summit in Bali was a landmark of coalescing

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PETE MULLER FOR GREENPEACE

Wendell Berry, Bill McKibben, and James Hansen risked arrest during a protest last March blockading the Capitol Power Plant in Washington, D.C. "There were a massive number of people willing to commit civil disobedience on climate change. That just hasn't happened before," said Abigail Singer, a march participant.

» resistance. There, a broad network of grassroots NGOs such as the Third World Network, the farmers' coalition Via Campesina, and representatives of communities directly affected by the early impacts of global warming came together under the banner of "Climate Justice Now!" The network has maintained a visible presence at international negotiations, pressuring advanced industrialized countries that, in the words of one network statement, "have refused to live up to their own legal and moral obligations to radically cut emissions and support developing countries' efforts to reduce emissions and adapt to climate impacts."

The lesson Krill draws: "We need to turn up the heat in the United States."

### Bringing Home the Heat

"In the U.S., historically, [large-scale mobilization] has tended to work best when there's a progressive leader in power and some kind of mass awareness of the problem," argues Andy Bichlbaum of the Yes Men. "We have both of those things now," he says of the climate crisis, "we just don't have people taking to the streets."

The Yes Men, pranksters famous for

impersonating corporate spokespeople at high-profile events, are part of one coalition working to change that. They helped create BeyondTalk.net, where visitors can sign a pledge of resistance, vowing to be one of 10,000 willing to risk arrest at protests that will take place simultaneously in major cities before the December U.N. climate conference in Copenhagen, Denmark.

While the United States lags behind some other parts of the world, activity has proliferated here in the past two years. This is particularly true in Appalachia, dubbed "Climate Ground Zero" by organizers who are challenging the ghastly practice of mountaintop-removal mining. The CoalSwarm website keeps a running tally of protests, and its swiftly growing list of events in West Virginia and North Carolina includes civil disobedience marches onto mining sites, tree sits to halt mountaintop blasting, and an action in which climbers scaled a dragline excavator to stop its use.

On the other side of the country, in the Navajo Nation, ongoing resistance at the Desert Rock coal-fired power plant contributed to the EPA withdrawal of its air quality permit this

summer. Indeed, CoalSwarm cites more than 75 coal plants cancelled, abandoned, or put on hold countrywide in 2007 and 2008, owing in large part to organized community opposition.

In early March, a coalition effort to channel local actions into a national mobilization produced crowds demanding closure of the Capitol Power Plant. The plant, one of the dirtiest coal-burning facilities in the country, sits in downtown Washington, D.C., and helps heat the chambers of Congress. The protest took place immediately after the massive Power Shift conference, which drew over 12,000 young people to the nation's capital to attend workshops on climate activism and lobbying techniques. Thousands of people—including many Power Shift participants, as well as movement luminaries such as writer Bill McKibben and world-renowned climate scientist James Hansen—risked police reprisal when they blockaded the Capitol Power Plant's entrances.

It worked: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid preemptively announced that they would instruct Capitol officials to shift the plant to natural gas. Activists regard this as only a partial victory, citing natural gas, along with nuclear power and "clean coal," as among the "false solutions" currently being promoted for climate change. Nevertheless, the mobilization served as a promising sign for future resistance.

"There were massive numbers of people willing to commit civil disobedience on climate change," says Singer. "That just hasn't happened before."

### The Road to Copenhagen

Environmentalists almost universally agree that the upcoming Copenhagen conference represents a critical moment for the planet, and thus a key time for the public to exert pressure. Groups in NGO offices, church basements, and action camps are contributing to major climate organizing campaigns—including citizen lobbying, public awareness, and direct action—each of which could be the largest of its kind in history.



PHOTO BY MAC URATA

## KUMI NAIDOO | CLIMATE HERO

**K**umi Naidoo learned early in life what mass movements of ordinary people can accomplish: At age 15, he organized youth and neighborhood groups to push for an end to apartheid in South Africa. Nearly 30 years later, Naidoo is building a global movement to force world leaders to adopt a binding agreement on climate change. He chairs the **GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR CLIMATE ACTION**, the group behind **TCKTCKTCK**, a diffuse and colorful campaign for worldwide mobilization whose name evokes a countdown for climate action. All of TckTckTck's actions, from civil disobedience and street protests to a celebrity music video, send the same message to global policymakers: The time has come for urgent, decisive steps to curb climate change. Naidoo will continue his climate organizing work when he takes the helm of Greenpeace International this fall. *Interviewed by Kate Sheppard*

**What is the role of direct action in shaping the debate on climate change?** History shows that we are only able to effect change when decent men and women are prepared to put their lives on the line, go to prison, take risks, and do it all peacefully. That's what happened in the civil rights movement in the United States and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.

If we are brutally honest with ourselves about the response of our governments to petitioning, dialogue, and other normal campaigning, we'd see that such methods have not delivered the kind of results we need. I think you will be seeing more and more civil disobedience.

**What one message do you want the TckTckTck campaign to send to world leaders?** That the cost of failing to agree to a fair, ambitious, and binding deal in Copenhagen will be devastating for every single country on this planet. If we don't act now, the

world will pay a very high price in the future, both financially and socially.

**What lessons do you draw from your experiences working to end apartheid?** It's important to build as much unity as possible. We must encourage people to focus on the considerable number of areas where they agree and to respect where they have differences. We also need sacrifice, courage, commitment, and strong leadership across all sectors of society—faith, trade unions, NGOs, and the business community. And we must always look for allies within the government. **y**



**Kate Sheppard** covers energy and environmental politics from Washington, D.C. She currently writes for *Mother Jones* and was previously the political reporter for *Grist*.



» On October 24, environmentalists throughout the world joined creative demonstrations that drew attention to 350—what McKibben calls “the most important number on Earth.” He writes, “A NASA team headed by James Hansen reported that the maximum amount of carbon the atmosphere can safely hold is 350 parts per million, at least if we want a planet ‘similar to the one on which civilization developed and to which life on earth is adapted.’ Since we’re already at 390 ppm, the message was clear: we don’t need to buy an insurance policy to reduce the threat of future warming. We need a fire extinguisher, and we need it now.”

350.org was coordinated by the same organizers who created the Step It Up campaign in 2007, which produced 2,000 demonstrations spread across all 50 states to demand that Congress cut domestic carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050. This time, they worked internationally, and they were awed by the growing momentum.

“I can’t really believe it,” says organizer May Boeve of the events in more than 180 countries. “We have scuba divers off the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, and we have monks in the Himalayas, and we have musicians in all different corners of the world.” Photos or video from each site were sent to world leaders, she says, “to communicate this sense that the public is not only paying attention to Copenhagen, they know what the outcome needs to be. They know we need to get to 350.”

Another day of action, taking place on November 30, a week before the start of the Copenhagen summit, will be more likely to result in jailed activists. The Mobilization for Climate Justice, Rising Tide, and other allies will be coordinating events that target major polluters, interfere with carbon-emission-as-usual, and demand strong regulation. “For people who feel they can’t get arrested because they have too much at stake right now, the Beyond-Talk.net site has an ‘action offsets’ pro-

gram,” Bichlbaum explains. “Just like you can buy carbon offsets, you can buy action offsets” that will pay for training or bail for someone who can risk arrest.

#### “Seattle” the Summit?

A significant precedent for this fall’s protests is the 1999 mobilization against the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle. Not accidentally, the November 30 events fall on the 10th anniversary of Seattle’s pivotal day of action. With tens of thousands of people rallying outside the WTO sessions, Seattle brought together an unlikely coalition of trade unionists, environmentalists, indigenous rights advocates, anti-sweatshop campaigners, and small farmers who recognized that the exploitative model of corporate globalization championed by the WTO cut across diverse causes and communities. The success of those groups in working together to derail the WTO talks is routinely forgotten by those who depict Seattle as a mindless riot.

Drawing inspiration for the present, a Rising Tide statement argues, “This year we have the opportunity to construct a movement of movements around climate, and find common ground in struggling for our collective survival.”

Regardless of the final shape that Copenhagen protests take, the crucial role that citizens must play in forcing better solutions is clear. “In order to get any sort of climate policy that even resembles something good,” says Singer, “we’re going to need massive amounts of people to get involved in these sorts of mobilizations.”

Bichlbaum adds, “We have the technology that we need right now to stop climate change. The technology we need is a pen and a piece of paper. All we need is to sign the right laws. And the demand for that goes through the streets.”



**Mark Engler** is a senior analyst with Foreign Policy In Focus and author of *How to Rule the World: The Coming Battle Over the Global Economy* (Nation Books, 2008). He can be reached via DemocracyUprising.com. Research assistance for this

article provided by Sean Nortz.

## How Will You Get Involved?

We don’t have to tell you to switch your light bulbs and carry a cloth bag to the grocery store: You already do. But saving the planet is going to take more than a reusable mug. So how do you take your beliefs from private home to public square?

**Tell your friends.** Your neighbors. The guy next to you on the bus. Talking to others about climate change may feel awkward (“So, how do you feel about greenhouse gases?”), but it helps spread the word that climate change is real, and that we can still do something about it. Talk about how you’re giving up your car, or how you’ve been writing your congressperson.

**DIY.** Join the No Impact Project ([noimpactproject.org](http://noimpactproject.org)) or organize your neighbors around the Transition Towns movement ([transitionus.org](http://transitionus.org)). When you change the way you live, and help others change the way they live, momentum builds for legislative change.

#### Become a local advocate.

Send letters to the editor, work for climate-friendly policies (bike lanes, public transit), and join up with others to amplify your voice. Plug in to action-oriented organizations. Then donate, and demonstrate.

[www.YesMagazine.org/resourceguide52](http://www.YesMagazine.org/resourceguide52)

A list of activist groups to join

# End of Big Coal?

MOMENTUM BUILDS TO STOP MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL  
AND NEW COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS



PHOTO BY KENT KESSINGER  
APPALACHIAN VOICES FLIGHT COURTESY OF SOUTH WINGS

Scarred mountain near Rawl, West Virginia. Largely hidden from most Americans, a highly destructive form of coal mining called mountaintop removal has devastated 1 million acres in the central and southern Appalachian Mountains. People across America use electricity that is at least partially generated by mountaintop removal coal, but it is a small amount that could easily come from cleaner sources of energy.

## Christine MacDonald

PATRICK O'HARA WORKS next door to a coal-burning power plant in Chicago and was recently diagnosed with asthmatic bronchitis brought on, he believes, by breathing in pollution from the plant.

So, when he heard about a march around the coal-burning plant that supplies energy to the U.S. Capitol, O'Hara joined thousands of people who marched around the plant. The March 2 protest marked a high point in the battle to end the country's dependence on coal, which supplies half of U.S. electricity and about a third of greenhouse gas emissions.

Activists around the country had already won dozens of local fights to block construction of new power plants. In Appalachia, meanwhile, protests against a strip-mining technique that flattens entire mountaintops had coal companies on the defensive. The industry was starting to look decidedly out of step with the challenges of climate change.

But the Obama administration has taken an ambiguous stance on mountaintop mining, blocking fast-track permits but allowing the practice after case-by-case reviews.

"Coal is an incredibly powerful

industry," says author and activist Bill McKibben, who helped organize the March 2 protest. "There are whole congressional delegations that are, in effect, subsidiaries of the coal industry. It's not going to be won in a day, but the movement is building."

Since 2000, coal-mining companies have contributed \$16.2 million to members of Congress, according to OpenSecrets.org. The electric generation industry ranked 10th in the center's list of top industry contributors to Congress in the 2010 election cycle and has given a total of \$95.3 million since 2000.

»

» Activists have succeeded in derailing many of the coal industry's 150 proposed plants—as of mid-June, nearly 100 projects had been nixed, according to the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign. But new projects have emerged.

Anti-coal activists say that a sea change has taken place in the last few years as the media has focused more attention on the debate and the public has become better acquainted with coal's dark side.

"Three years ago, you rarely heard anything about coal on the news," says Louise Brown, a Navajo activist in New Mexico fighting plans to build a third coal-burning power plant in her region of the state. Brown has camped out at the proposed site of the Desert Rock power plant since December 2006. "More people are aware now," she says.

### Coal: the Climate Wedge

In addition to its contribution of about a quarter of the planet's total global warming emissions, mining coal creates water pollution, and, while burning, it spews more than a dozen pollutants into the air, such as arsenic, sulfur dioxide, lead and other heavy metals. It is the largest source of acid rain-inducing sulfur dioxide emissions and the second-largest source of nitrogen oxides connected to smog, asthma,

and other respiratory ailments. And scientists have detected dangerous levels of the neurotoxin mercury in rivers and snowpack near power plants.

As these environmental and health concerns have gained mainstream recognition, a broader movement against coal is beginning to coalesce.

Mike Roselle, who helped establish Earth First!, the Ruckus Society and the Rainforest Action Network (RAN), refers to the mining and power plant sides of the coal business as "the dig and the burn."

"We are building allies through the whole chain of custody," he says. Coal could be the "big wedge." In the pie chart of greenhouse gas emissions, "if you take that one piece out of the pie, everything becomes possible."

His group has taken the fight to Coal River Mountain, West Virginia, the site of a mountaintop removal operation by Massey Energy Company, the nation's fourth-largest coal mining firm. They have staged sit-ins, raised banners and been arrested and slapped with increasingly restrictive temporary restraining orders.

Rather than choke off support, the judge's ruling apparently has helped recruitment efforts.

Word of Roselle's efforts spread across the blogosphere and attracted celebrity supporters such as Daryl Hannah and eco-celebrities like NASA climate scientist James Hansen and RAN's Michael Brune. The three were among 32 people arrested during a June 23 protest that turned into a tense faceoff between hundreds of environmentalists and miners and their families.

Two days later, the Senate Environment and Public Works' Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife held a hearing on the impact of mountaintop-removal mining operations.

Roselle and others are facing jail time for violating the judge's orders, and are bracing for a lawsuit from Massey charging them with disrupting its business and costing the corporation money. If the case comes before a jury, they may use the same legal

arguments that cleared six Greenpeace protestors of criminal charges stemming from an attempt to shut down a British coal plant two years ago. Those protestors beat property damage charges, arguing that their actions were lawful because they aimed to stop the climate change responsible for even greater damages to property worldwide. Roselle says Hansen, whose testimony on the effects of global warming helped the British activists win the precedent-setting case, has already agreed to testify for his group, if the judge will allow it.

### An End to Mountaintop Removal?

By framing the debate around "mountaintop removal" activists have hit on a phrase that carries emotional weight. Nearly 500 mountains in the U.S. have been leveled in the last few decades, according to activists, wiping out some of the most biodiverse forests in the country. Tons of mine waste is routinely dumped into valleys, a practice that has buried more than 700 streams, according to the EPA.

During the Bush administration the agency fast-tracked the permits for mountaintop mining. In June, the Obama administration ended the fast-track policy, but stopped short of restoring the pre-Bush classification of mine waste as an illegal pollutant. Instead, the Interior Department, the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers are conducting case-by-case reviews.

RAN's Brune and others hope Obama will take on the coal industry as part of his efforts to tackle global warming. Mary Anne Hitt, of the Sierra Club, points out that wind power now employs more people than the country's coal mines. The American Wind Energy Association says the industry employed 85,000 in 2008; coal-mining jobs numbered 81,000 in 2007, according to the Department of Energy. But "if we keep these old coal plants chugging along," Hitt says, "we don't open up any new markets for renewables." ⑦

A longer version of this article first appeared in the September/October edition of E/The Environmental Magazine.



### In Your Backyard?

Power plants around the country use coal from destructive mountaintop mines. Search your zipcode to meet the communities and landscapes to which you're connected.

[www.YesMagazine.org/mtr](http://www.YesMagazine.org/mtr)





PHOTO COURTESY INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

## CLAYTON THOMAS-MÜLLER | CLIMATE HERO

Clayton Thomas-Müller is working to keep corporations from privatizing the atmosphere, as they have privatized the land and exploited the natural resources that once belonged to the First Nations of Canada. As an activist with the **INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK**, Thomas-Müller campaigns against the multinational oil companies that are stripping crude oil from the Alberta tar sands and leaving behind toxic heavy metals and carcinogens that pollute nearby native lands. Indigenous people around the world are among those most affected by fossil-fuel development, and Thomas-Müller is organizing those communities to make sure they have a voice in the United Nations climate negotiations in Copenhagen this December. *Interviewed by Kate Sheppard*

**What is the impact of the fossil-fuel economy on indigenous communities?** Thirty-five percent of North America's fossil fuels and around 80 percent of its uranium are underneath native land. Native communities face incredible pressure to enter into the industrialization game.

**What influence has tar sands development had on the communities you work with?** The five First Nations in the region of the tar sands rely on traditional food sources, like moose, fish, beaver, and muskrat, all of which have become contaminated by mining pollution. We're talking about a community of just 1,200 that's seen more than 100 deaths in the last decade from rare cancers and autoimmune diseases. The tar sands leases also violate aboriginal treaty rights; they were sold by the provincial government without the prior informed consent of local communities.

**Based on the experiences of indigenous people, what should a climate agreement at Copenhagen include?** Focusing only on market-based solutions, most of them voluntary, will lead

to further privatization of the commons, like the forests in the Global South and here in northern Canada. The strategy will commodify the Earth's atmospheric carbon-cycling capacity. Privatization has serious implications for those living in communities near big emitters, and for everybody on Mother Earth who uses these commons to sustain life.

For example, the number one reason why Canada has never ratified the U.N. Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples or made a Kyoto commitment is because Canada's economy is based on extracting raw resources and selling them to our biggest trading partner, the United States. The only way to stop the tar sands extraction is through aboriginal and treaty rights negotiation strategies, led by First Nations in Canada.

Going into Copenhagen, we're saying, let's not lose sight of binding mechanisms—laws. Let's have the governments of the world take back their sovereignty from corporations. Let's stop subsidizing corporations with public funds. When corporations violate their emissions caps, let's fine the hell out of them and divert those resources to the renewable energy economy. **Y**

**RICH AND POOR COUNTRIES ARE IN THIS TOGETHER.** If either fails to step up, the planet is in trouble. A climate deal must take into account the Global North's responsibility for nearly 70 percent of greenhouse pollution and the Global South's need to move out of poverty. The North must cut back sharply on emissions while the South leapfrogs over the industrial age to clean-energy prosperity.

# No Fairness, No Deal



EQUITY IS THE ONLY  
WAY TO BREAK  
THE CLIMATE  
STALEMATE BETWEEN  
THE GLOBAL SOUTH  
AND THE NORTH

**Gopal Dayaneni and Mateo Nube**

To stop the climate crisis, we're going to have to build a fairer world.

Any solution to climate change will require all nations to act together to reduce global emissions. But the fact is, countries around the world are not entering a "post-carbon future" on a level playing field. Poor countries have had the smallest role in creating the climate crisis, and they have fewest resources available to change and adapt.

The climate policies we pursue will have to support poor communities and developing nations. Everyone, whether they live in industrial or developing countries, has fundamental rights to decent levels of food, housing, health,

and clothing, and many nations in the Global South will not get behind a climate solution that doesn't allow their citizens these rights.

In the United States, we need to push for solutions that equitably distribute the burdens of the coming transition between rich and poor nations. If residents of industrialized nations don't pressure their governments to share wealth and technological capacities with the Global South, extreme poverty will inevitably aggravate the planet's ecological stress. Poor communities that are left out of the post-carbon economy and robbed of resources by corporations

will be forced to strip the diminishing amounts of clean water, forests, and land just to survive.

So what does an equitable approach look like? There is a growing international consensus around a core set of principles called "climate justice."

**1**

*Share the responsibility  
for emissions reductions fairly.*

A FAIR AND WORKABLE international approach must be based on the historical responsibility wealthy industrial countries bear for causing climate change as well as the capacity of these

countries to finance the necessary transition.

Over the past 100 years, the United States has been the largest cumulative emitter of greenhouse gases, according to data from the World Resources Institute. Together, the United States, the European Union, Japan, and Russia account for nearly 70 percent of the global build-up of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> between 1850 and 2004. In the past two years, China has surpassed the United States as the largest CO<sub>2</sub> emitter, but China's population is four and a half times larger. U.S. per capita emissions are still much higher.

Industrialized nations became rich at the expense of the Global South. The development and industrialization of the North has come about through the continual, and often forced, extraction of minerals, plants, fossil fuels, food, and human labor from the Global South, and through corporate globalization. Oil, extracted primarily from the Global South, has been the life-blood of globalization. Along with its sister coal, it has made industrial capitalism hum at a feverish pace for the past 200 years. By exhausting the capacity of the atmosphere, land, and ocean to absorb carbon, industrialized nations have left countries like India, China, and Brazil little room to create industrial economies that establish decent standards of living for their populations.

The prevailing proposals for financing the transition to a low-carbon economy involve distributing funds from North to South through entities like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. While financing from the North is needed, these institutions are the wrong choice. Both have track records of saddling poor countries with debt, requiring government spending cuts that undermine national economies, and handing lucrative contracts to transnational corporations.

The mechanisms set up to distribute and allocate these funds should be transparent, democratic, and accountable to civil society in the Global South. People's movements around the world

and a growing number of countries—including Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Cuba, and the entire African Union—have proposed requiring industrialized nations to pay their “ecological debt” through a United Nations entity. Wealthy countries would pay into the fund according to their level of responsibility for climate change, and the money would be used to finance clean technologies and adaptation strategies in poor countries.

Recently, India and China jointly called on the Global North to take the lead in reducing emissions and providing money and green technology to developing countries. And Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva recently told the press that at Copenhagen he will urge the Global North to “pay for the damage that they have already caused to the planet.”

The only way for an international climate agreement to become politically, economically, and ecologically feasible is for rich countries to resolve their ecological debt.

2

### *End overconsumption and resource depletion.*

CLIMATE CHANGE IS MERELY one of the most obvious symptoms of a consumer economy that is pushing our ecological and human systems to the brink. “Global economic growth is the major cause of rising emissions,” writes British journalist George Monbiot. “Even deforestation in poor countries is driven mostly by commercial operations delivering timber, meat, and animal feed to rich consumers.”

If rich communities move toward a “clean energy” paradigm but continue to depend on the natural resources and cheap labor of the Global South to feed their huge appetite for stuff (even “green” stuff), the climate crisis will only worsen.

In China, for example, “green industry” is displacing rural farming villages. A new industrial zone west of Shanghai will span 98 square kilometers

and include a “Solar Valley” to produce photovoltaics and other green technologies for export. Ironically, this development zone's energy needs will be fed by multiple coal power plants.

Reaching the aggressive carbon reductions demanded by science will require ramping down overproduction for overconsumption by the United States, Canada, and Europe.

3

### *Give communities control over their food, land, and energy.*

PLACE-BASED, DEMOCRATICALLY run communities that have a reflective and responsive relationship with their ecosystem are more capable of adapting to ecological transition.

Supporting local control, among other things, means standing with communities that are resisting fossil-fuel extraction. These communities are bearing the worst brunt of our pollution-based economy and articulating one of the simplest solutions to the climate crisis: Keep fossil fuels in the ground.

Two years ago, the indigenous Huaorani people of Ecuador won the provisional support of the Ecuadorian government in their campaign to keep the oil in the rainforests of Yasuní National Park untouched. Rainforests store carbon and prevent it from entering the atmosphere, so the move is a big win for our planet. It's also an expensive option for the Ecuadorian government—Yasuní's estimated 850 million oil barrels constitute 20 percent of Ecuador's proven oil reserves. Yet Ecuador is willing to abandon the development of an oil field in Yasuní if other countries help it recover \$350 million annually—50 percent of the income it would have obtained from extracting crude oil. As of this writing, the government of Germany has committed an initial \$50 million a year, and the leaders of France and Spain are considering a pledge. If successful, this initiative will be a watershed moment in the struggle for

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# Homegrown Solutions

*In Copenhagen, the question of climate equity will be contentious. But communities in the Global South aren't waiting for an international agreement. They are turning to sustainable, climate-friendly solutions to address a problem they did little to create, but must nonetheless help to solve.*

## Drought Forces New Farming Methods

LITTLE MORE THAN A DECADE AGO, after the fall of apartheid, the native South African cultivators in the villages of Wupperthal and Heiveld formed rooibos cooperatives and began selling their Fair Trade certified tea around the world.



Harvesting rooibos for tea just outside Wupperthal in South Africa.

PHOTO BY  
CHRISTOF KESSEMEIER

» climate justice—the first time that a community on the front lines has succeeded in keeping fossil fuels in the ground, and one of the first times a developing nation has negotiated compensation for ecological service it's providing to the world.

Here in North America, there are also inspiring struggles resisting fossil fuel extraction that merit our immediate attention and support, like the campaigns to end mountaintop removal in Appalachia, stop tar sands extraction in Alberta, Canada, and halt Chevron's heavy crude oil refinement in

Richmond, California. A win on any of these fronts would build momentum for a "leave it in the ground" movement in industrial countries and tell the world that the people of the United States care deeply about climate justice.

### Creating a Green Economy for Everyone

It is exciting to see a multiracial movement within the United States calling for a just climate transition that helps save the planet while producing jobs, wealth, and economic stability for marginalized communities. We need to seek the same kinds of solutions

internationally.

We can learn a great deal from inspiring international networks such as Oilwatch International and Via Campesina, the international organization of rural farmers and peasants. The false dichotomies of economy versus environment or race versus environment don't exist for many of the vibrant and sophisticated movements in the Global South. Indigenous and land-based peoples' movements understand that our collective survival is deeply dependent on our relationship to the Earth.

But in the last few years, the cooperatives have been coping with the effects of a changing climate. Higher temperatures and severe droughts decreased yields and eroded the soil.

The co-ops turned to sustainable farming practices as a way to confront the climate challenges. In the spring of 2009, farmers dug irrigation ditches and started to grow a diverse variety of plants around the fields to enrich the soil and stop erosion. The irrigation also provides water for trees that shelter their tea fields.

"Their efforts to cope are an indicator of what is to come for all of us eventually," says Rodney North, a spokesperson for Equal Exchange, the international Fair Trade co-op that sells the farmers' tea. "[They are] a reminder that we ought not sit idly by while others suffer the consequences of the forces we've set in motion." — *Jeff Raderstrong*

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## Rural Residents Build Hydropower

AN ELECTRICITY COMPANY IS FUELING a small revolution in rural Kenya. Kiangurwe, a community in the country's Central Province, is saying no to expensive kerosene imports and to the regional power corporation, Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC). Instead, residents are harnessing their own natural resources and organizing themselves to fulfill their needs independently.

Their solution: small hydropower, through a company called GPower. GPower's co-founder, Nyaga Ndiga, says the company's work "is not just about [providing] power, but also about change."

Local residents volunteer two days a week to build a hydro dam and help fund the project through weekly 90-cent contributions. Once the project is complete,

members of the community will staff the organization that runs the dam, and those who helped build it will receive dividends. Subscribers will pay an average of eight dollars a month for 53 kilowatt hours.

A local funding system aims to ensure sustainability. Eight percent of the project is paid for by wealthy local tea and coffee farmers who have bought shares in GPower Ltd. Donors and subscribers will pay the other 92 percent.

GPower's first dam will open in late December, providing electricity to about 110 people. By the end of 2014, a total of 11 hydro dams are planned to be up and running on the Thiba River, reaching a total of 11,000 households, 13 schools and two hospitals. — *Siena Anstis*

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## New Energy Sources for Light, Cooking

ELECTRICITY IS OUT OF REACH for three out of four Bangladeshis, who burn kerosene for light and biomass for cooking. Natural gas supplies in this country of 160 million people are projected to peak within the next five to 10 years.

Now, through Grameen Shakti, a subsidiary of Grameen Bank (winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize), some 10,000 to 15,000 photovoltaic solar energy systems are being installed in rural areas each month. The organization is also setting up biogas (methane-based) systems for cooking and high-efficiency, low-smoke hearths made of clay.

Using a market-based, microcredit loan approach, by 2015, Grameen Shakti aims to install 7.5 million solar, 2 million biogas, and 20 million improved cooking systems. The organization also is focused on generating 100,000 green jobs for women, mostly related to the manufacture and maintenance of solar panels. — *Rik Langendoen*

Communities throughout the South are resisting resource exploitation and creating their own solutions, from the indigenous U'wa people in Colombia who are campaigning against oil development on their land to Indian farmers who are organizing seed banks to protect the cultural and biological diversity that has enabled them to weather drought and flood for thousands of years.

Groups like these have an integrated vision for how food, land, and energy sovereignty will help create a resilient society.

"A global economy that takes ecological limits into account must necessarily localize production to reduce wasting both natural resources and people," says Vandana Shiva, the celebrated Indian author and activist. "Reclaiming democratic control over our food and water and our ecological survival is the necessary project for our freedom."

Restoring our planet's health will require a lasting redistribution of power and resources. Recognizing our common heritage of water, food, and energy should be at the heart of a new framework for global resource

management. Natural resources need to be conserved for the common good, not privatized and unsustainably exploited. We must plan and execute a just transition to a sustainable, low-carbon, resource-balanced society that promotes people's rights, honors their work, and protects the well-being and integrity of all life on the planet. **V**

**Mateo Nube** is director for the Movement Generation Justice and Ecology Project, [movementgeneration.org](http://movementgeneration.org), a group that coordinates organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area working for economic and ecological justice. **Gopal Dayaneni** is an organizer with Movement Generation and a trainer with the Ruckus Society.



**CLEAN ENERGY IS JUST STEP ONE** in the transition to a climate-friendly economy. The United States, with less than 5 percent of the world's people, will no longer be able to use about a quarter of all fossil fuel. New economies built on local production, green jobs, smart design, and well-being—instead of stuff—will let us build ways of life where humans and nature can thrive.

# Life after Stuff



ANNIE LEONARD REVEALS WHAT GIVES HER STRENGTH, EVEN AS SHE AND HER POPULAR FILM, *THE STORY OF STUFF*, ARE ATTACKED AS UN-AMERICAN

Environmental activist Annie Leonard visits a Berkeley park that is on a reclaimed landfill. Her 2007 animated film has had 7.5 million views and inspired millions to rethink the consumer economy.

LANE HARTWELL  
FOR YES! MAGAZINE









Annie Leonard

I've spent much of the past two decades visiting factories where our stuff is made and dumps where it is disposed of around the world. After years of seeing firsthand the often hidden environmental, social, and health impacts of all the stuff we consume, I've developed a sort of neurosis: When I look at a product—a disposable coffee cup, a cell phone, a piece of clothing—its entire life cycle flashes before my eyes.

Instinctively, some part of my brain runs through images of oil fields in Ogoniland, garment factories in Port-au-Prince, factories in Gujarat, ships crisscrossing the ocean, and dumps

massive waste production and somehow make it seem tolerable. In the same way, we can't solve the climate crisis, resource depletion, or social injustice until we see what's driving

viewers in some 200 countries and territories have visited the site more than 7.5 million times. The film has been shown in universities, churches, and community meetings, and even on television. The response has amazed me in two ways.

First, I'm inspired and delighted by the breadth and volume of positive feedback. We've been flooded with emails from people for whom the film resonated. Many have written to thank us for articulating something they felt but couldn't quite express. We've heard from people new to these issues, who tell us that the film turned on a light switch of awareness, motivating them to rethink their relationship to stuff. And we've heard from longtime activists who've worked on one piece of the materials economy for years without thinking much about the broader system.

One day I received emails from

## WHILE I ONCE FELT LIKE A MARGINALIZED GARBAGE-NUT, I NOW REALIZE I AM PART OF A MASSIVE COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE WHO KNOW DEEP IN OUR HEARTS THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG.

here and abroad. It's a fascinating neurosis to have, but to be honest, it has been lonely sometimes. While many friends and colleagues work on more photogenic issues like rainforest preservation or more visible issues like social inequity, I have often been alone in my fascination with trash. No longer.

It's true: I do love exploring garbage, visiting dumps, and rifling through trash cans in new cities. But for me, garbage never has been the end point; it is an entree to much deeper economic, social, and environmental issues—the same issues that many are working to address. Over the years, I've learned that we can't solve the waste problem by working only on waste. We must examine the economic and cultural forces that drive such

those problems. And when we look deep enough, we see that many of the drivers are the same.

Looking deeper can be hard and intimidating. It is much easier to call for a forest to be saved or a toxic chemical to be eliminated from consumer products than it is to ask the tough questions about how we're treating each other and the planet.

In late 2007, Free Range Studios and I made an animated film, *The Story of Stuff*, which sought to spark conversation about the hidden impacts of the stuff we consume. Our hope was that *The Story of Stuff* would inspire viewers to think about the underlying connections among a range of issues and to think big about alternatives beyond individual campaigns. Since we posted the film online at [www.storyofstuff.org](http://www.storyofstuff.org),

both an Oxford University economics professor and a fourth-grader from Michigan. The professor, originally from India, explained that in Punjab there is an expression: to enclose the ocean in a bowl. "*The Story of Stuff*," he said "covers so much that it encloses the ocean in a bowl." The fourth-grader, who had seen the film in class, said *The Story of Stuff* was "totally awesome" and filled the page with dozens of electronic smiley faces.

We've heard from people who have incorporated *The Story of Stuff* into teaching curricula, who have written songs or created puppet shows based on it, and who have organized neighborhood stuff swaps inspired by the newfound desire to have less stuff and more community.

While I once felt like a marginalized

garbage-nut, I now realize I am part of a massive community of people, all over the world, who know deep in our hearts that something is wrong. Our economy is off track. Half the world's population lives on less than \$2.50 a day, unable to meet basic needs, while a handful of people amass obscene levels of wealth. Our industries convert the planet's resources into wastelands while pumping out toxic chemicals so

don't like stuff" and "you're a traitor for questioning consumption." There's even a blog discussing the best physical violence I deserve for daring to raise these issues.

These responses make me sad, not so much for me, but for the sorry state of discourse in this country. What does it mean for our country if one must endure such hatred for raising important issues about resource depletion,

respectful conversation about what is and is not working in our current economic and industrial system. There are many things that simply aren't working, yet these issues remain beyond the attention of mainstream media and elected officials. We've got to turn up the volume on these conversations and refuse to let the attacks on us stifle discussion and dissent.

So write articles and blogs, ask

## EVERY LEADER I ADMIRE THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAS FACED FAR GREATER THREATS THAN FOX NEWS TALK SHOW HOSTS.

pervasive that they are now present in every body, even in those of newborn infants. And our culture encourages us to find fulfillment in rampant consumerism rather than compassion and connection.

The outpouring of support has shown me that many, many people recognize these problems and want change—enough to actually make that change! It's not just a few little pockets of us in eco-hotspots. All around the world, parents, students, farmers, activists, religious leaders, writers, engineers, scientists, fisher folk, businesspeople, and many others are standing up, speaking out, calling for a new kind of economy and culture that serves the planet and its people, rather than sacrifices these for the economic benefit of the few. So, in spite of the dire data on the state of the planet, I find myself more full of hope than ever. I am not alone.

We are not alone.

At the same time, another response has surprised me. This one is much smaller, but makes up in viciousness what it lacks in both size and critical reflection. Since the film's launch, both it and I have been accused of being anti-American and of terrorizing viewers. I've even been called "Marx in a ponytail." I've received hate mail, with messages such as "you should move to a mud hut in Afghanistan if you

toxic chemicals, worker safety, economic justice, and overconsumption? Why is it not seen as a service to our country to point out where we've gone astray, where our economic and industrial system is no longer serving the vast majority of the country's—or the planet's—people? Why is it so unacceptable to say, "We could do better"? Isn't saying so a sign of respect? Of hope?


I know we can do better. We can design and make our products without trashing the environment or our health. We can share the planet's resources more fairly. We can replace a culture of out-of-control consumerism with one of wonder and appreciation for this phenomenal planet and the people with whom we share it.

Now that I know how many people share this vision, I am more confident than ever that we can bring about this transition. And now that I've seen the viciousness of the resistance firsthand, I see more clearly the structural and cultural obstacles we'll face.

But for those seeking to make the world a better place, facing resistance is nothing new. Every leader I admire throughout history has faced far greater threats than Fox News talk show hosts. We'll succeed if we keep our focus on the end goal—building a sustainable and just society.

A first step in that direction is advancing a rational, informed, and

questions in classes and church, visit elected officials, and raise these issues everywhere you go. With climate change as severe as it is, the future of the planet as we know it is at stake. Now would be a good time to get people to start talking about solutions. The Story of Stuff Project is going to continue doing our part to turn up the volume on these discussions. We're partnering with allied organizations to produce new films and launch an interactive website that allows viewers to share information and take collective action.

We need to be courageous, we need to support each other moving forward, and we need to stay focused, think big, and love strong. And, in doing so, we won't be alone. 

**Annie Leonard** is the director of the Berkeley, California-based Story of Stuff Project. Her book, a follow-up to the film, is scheduled to be released next year.



 **The Story of Stuff**

A fun and fact-filled look at our production and consumption patterns.  
[www.YesMagazine.org/storyofstuff](http://www.YesMagazine.org/storyofstuff)





LANE HARTWELL FOR YES! MAGAZINE



## PHAEDRA ELLIS-LAMKINS | CLIMATE HERO

**W**ith unemployment near 10 percent and the economy struggling to recover, how do you convince Americans to get involved in solving the climate crisis? Give them an opportunity to create a new, green economy, says Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins, leader of the Oakland-based nonprofit **GREEN FOR ALL**. Green For All organizes minority and low-income communities to press for green jobs and mobilizes their grassroots power into a national force for an inclusive, clean-energy economy. This year, the group has had several big wins, helping to secure federal funds in the stimulus bill for green jobs training and other programs that offer a pathway out of poverty. *Interviewed by Kate Sheppard*

**When you go into inner-city communities where unemployment numbers are well into the double-digits, how do you even begin talking about climate change?** The message we take to those communities is that the economic crisis on Main Street can actually be solved at the same time as we combat global warming.

I don't think there's anything more important than talking to people about jobs. Changing to a clean-energy economy offers so much opportunity for people who are struggling, and for their families.

**What do you hope will happen when people hear your message?** Our goal is to make this movement real for people. On Main Street, people have to see that their lives can improve through a green economy. There is no more critical place to do that than in communities like Detroit, Atlanta, and Oakland, where people have been hit hardest by the old economy.

We want to empower people to make their world better—make the environment healthier but also create economic opportunities. At an event Green For All held in Portland recently, we talked about how homes are weatherized and how we can change patterns of consumption. I heard a woman say, “This was the first time I got to be part of the conversation about our economy.”


I met a man in Newark. Most of his friends were in prison, but he graduated from high school and went through a green jobs training program. It took him a while, but he finally got a job. There's no more courageous human being than someone who says, “I'm making a choice because it's the right choice.” What we have to do is lift those people up and make sure there's opportunity.

**How is this vision for a green economy inspiring new voices to speak out on climate change?** Organizations are coming together to advocate for employment opportunities for people in the communities where they live, like funding for the Green Jobs Act. The Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the NAACP, and the Coalition on Civil Rights were crucial to getting green job programs included in legislation this year.

We've joined with the Hip Hop Caucus, the NAACP, and

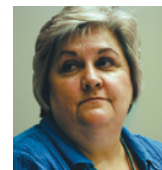
other organizations that have not always been traditional players in the environmental movement, and created Green the Block, which gets people involved in environmental projects in their own communities. That program's successes have shown us, in a short period of time, that when you mobilize communities of color and low-income communities, they really can make change in the environmental movement and also address the issues that are most critical to saving the planet.

On September 11 this year, we organized our first national day of service in remembrance of those who lost their lives eight years ago. We held Green the Block events—from organic farming to cleaning up neighborhoods—in cities across the country, and we saw that there is already an unstoppable movement. We're just fortunate to be part of it. The environmental movement can't win alone, and if we actually allow people to take leadership, they're willing, ready, and eager.

**How does your grassroots organizing influence your national policy work?** When we see what people are doing in these communities, with no support, we realize we have to take the boldness and fierceness that exists at a local level and translate that into national policy. We have to show policymakers that there are communities ready to turn the green economy into a reality. 



### MEET MORE CLIMATE HEROES



**Sharon Hanshaw:** Left homeless after Hurricane Katrina, she fights for communities that will suffer most from climate impacts.

**Marcus Ryan:** A former Obama campaigner helps neighbors find talented green workers to make their homes climate-friendly.

**Lorelei Scarbro:** An Appalachian grandmother says no to coal, yes to wind power.

[www.YesMagazine.org/climate-heroes](http://www.YesMagazine.org/climate-heroes)

# A Fast Track from Coal to Clean Energy

Alisa Gravitz

**T**he low-carbon, low-use energy future that's essential for tackling climate change is scaling up before our very eyes. If we roll out proven solutions—energy efficiency, lifestyle changes, geothermal, solar, wind, plug-in vehicles, and smart grid—with speed and scale, we can more than meet the 80–90 percent carbon reduction by 2025 that climate scientists now say should be our target. Some people are calling this the convergence of clean energy solutions.

Many Americans, however, believe renewable energy is too costly and unreliable. They worry that, in most places, the wind doesn't blow around the clock, and there's no place where the sun shines at night. Regulators and utility officials can't imagine enough efficiency and renewable energy going online fast enough to prevent the lights from flickering off during their watch.

But clean energy solutions are starting to achieve real speed and scale—and a new opportunity could further accelerate the renewable energy future. Just in the past year:

- Congress passed the stimulus package with more than \$20 billion for energy efficiency—the most important immediate and long-term strategy for tackling climate change.

- For the first time, renewable energy production, at 11.37 percent of U.S. supply, surpassed nuclear energy production, which was 11.18 percent, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. And throughout 2008 and 2009, new renewable energy installations grew faster than new fossil fuel production.

- In September, a broad coalition

of environmentalists, investors, farmers, faith congregations, policymakers, and local officials celebrated their 101st success at stopping planned U.S. coal plants in their tracks. In 2010 they are targeting 22 operating coal plants: We're truly seeing the beginning of the rapid end of coal in the United States.

- Solar is reaching price parity with coal. A solar farm outside of Las Vegas, Nevada, went online at a cost of about \$3.85 for each installed watt. The AMP Ohio coal plant, likely the next online, is running about \$3.65 per watt, not counting the cost of carbon the plant will produce while operating. Solar will be cost competitive with coal and nuclear across the country by 2015. And solar is on track to deliver 50 percent of U.S. energy, for all uses including plug-in vehicles, by 2042, according to Green America's Solar Catalyst program.

- Ford, General Motors, Toyota, Nissan, and Mitsubishi—and newcomers such as Tesla and Coda—promise to have plug-in hybrids and all-electric vehicles available between 2010 and 2012. Charging an electric vehicle with solar energy at today's prices costs the

**What do you think is the best way to move our economy forward?**

**77%**

"Investing in creating ways to get energy from alternative sources like solar and wind power."

**16%**

"Investing in finding more sources of oil, coal and natural gas."

**5%**

"Don't know"

Source: Public Agenda, "The Energy Learning Curve"

equivalent of about \$2.35 a gallon—and just \$1.30 a gallon at the price of solar projected for 2015. With the advent of the smart grid, you'll be able to charge your electric vehicle battery with solar during the day, and plug your car into your house to provide electricity at night.

- China has recently set ambitious goals and serious incentives for wind and solar, and India isn't far behind. Both countries are, unfortunately, still





**“Electric companies should be required to generate more energy from renewable, non-polluting energy sources, like wind and solar, even if this increases the cost of energy in the short run.”**

34% Strongly agree

43% Somewhat agree

**“Even though coal is a cheap and plentiful fuel, the government should ban the building of new coal-burning power plants because of the greenhouse gases they emit.”**

26% Strongly agree

27% Somewhat agree

Source: Public Agenda, “The Energy Learning Curve”

building coal plants. However, unlike in our country, energy doesn’t seem to come with ideological overtones. As solar and wind become less expensive than fossil fuels—and provide the benefit of clean air along with CO<sub>2</sub> reduction—China and India will be scaling up wind and solar, and leaving their coal plants in the dust. And they each hope to become the world’s supplier of choice for renewable energy.

All good news. But we need an accelerated transition strategy here in the United States—and an enabler that makes the cost of the transition less than or equal to what we’d otherwise pay, providing a backup to wind and solar until energy efficiency and renewable energy can carry the whole system.

### **Speeding to an All Renewable Energy System: A New Opportunity**

That enabler is natural gas, a fossil fuel that produces about half as much CO<sub>2</sub> as coal, and only 20 percent as much nitrous oxide, a far more potent greenhouse gas. Admittedly, it’s an imperfect enabler, and it’s not a

long-term solution, but it offers a better path than the one we’re on and a faster transition to the system we want.

Recently discovered natural gas reserves are big enough to power current levels of gas use for more than 100 years. The new discoveries are primarily in shale formations across much of the country—in the Rockies, throughout the Midwest, in Texas and Louisiana, and up the western side of the Appalachians and into the Adirondacks.

A significant new source of domestic natural gas provides three big opportunities for the United States.

It would allow our society, for the first time in history, to really assess the impact of developing a new natural resource—including choosing to develop little or none of it. Natural gas extraction causes environmental problems. Extracting shale gas is likely to be even worse: It’s done with a controversial process called “hydraulic fracturing,” which uses significant quantities of water and a slurry of chemicals, raising concerns about contaminating

groundwater. We’d need to determine where and how to extract the gas in the least harmful way possible, and assess the minimum amount of gas, used as a backup, that would allow the United States to transition to all renewable energy.

Second, we could begin converting existing coal plants to natural gas. No waiting for 20 years; let’s get this done within three years of completing a socially and environmentally responsible plan for extracting the new natural gas reserves. Almost all coal plants can be converted to run on natural gas. And once converted, natural gas plants can be easily dialed up or down—or turned off for months—as more renewables come online. A gas plant is a great backup for renewable energy—you only use it if you need it. That’s a big change from coal or nuclear plants, which are difficult to turn up, down, and off as demand changes.

Third, it would allow us to make aggressive, cost-effective regional clean energy convergence action plans to move to energy efficiency, renewables, plug-in vehicles and the smart grid—with natural gas as the backup—within 10 years.

With energy efficiency taking the lead and low-cost gas as a stop-gap, the transition to the all-renewables system would cost less than expanding our current energy system to meet future demands.

Most important, it will deliver the promise of the clean-energy future—real energy security, green jobs, a cleaner environment—and a real go at tackling climate change. **Y**



**Alisa Gravitz** is executive director of Green America, a national organization advocating for a just and sustainable economy ([greenamericatoday.org](http://greenamericatoday.org)) and a board member of the Positive Futures Network, publisher of YES! Magazine.



13 best clean energy ideas (plus 3 duds)  
[www.YesMagazine.org/energy-ideas](http://www.YesMagazine.org/energy-ideas)

# Who's Polluting the Climate Conversation?

MONEY, THINK TANKS, AND SCIENTISTS-FOR-HIRE  
BEHIND THE DOUBT AND DENIAL

James Hoggan

Scientists now warn that climate change is happening faster, and is a bigger threat, than they predicted just a few years ago. Yet the number of Americans who believe climate change is occurring at all is decreasing. That's shocking—but not surprising.

It's shocking because the stakes are so high and the science is so clear. A recent issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* carried an article reporting that sedimentary records from an Arctic lake show warmer temperatures in the last few decades than at any time in the past 200,000 years. At the same time, the Pew Research Center reported that the number of Americans who believe the Earth is warming has dropped from 71 percent to just 57 percent in the last 18 months.

How can that be unsurprising? Well, because the loudest voices in the U.S. climate conversation come not from scientists, but from dirty energy industries, with their paid experts and think tanks, who are promoting a view of science that serves their economic interests, regardless of what is actually true. This is not an idle assertion. It comes from four years of research on the climate website DeSmogBlog.com, which Richard Littlemore and I have compiled

into the new book *Climate Cover-up: The Crusade to Deny Global Warming*.

Among our most disturbing discoveries were three instances in which corporate associations set out strategy and tactics for attacking the science of climate change—or science in general.

The coal barons went first. They recognized the strength of the science almost two decades ago. In 1991, the Western Fuels Association and the Edison Electric Institute crafted a plan to argue that global warming would be a good thing. They hired PR people,

tested messages, and recruited compliant scientists to argue their case. They put out radio ads with messages like, "If the Earth is getting warmer, why is Minneapolis getting colder?" (Even though Minneapolis was, in fact, warming faster than the planetary average.) Then they paid scientists like the University of Virginia's Patrick Michaels to write skeptical editorials for small town papers—publications unlikely to have the resources to check whether someone was being paid by industry.

Philip Morris joined the climate-



ILLUSTRATION BY JIM ROWE

change fight in 1993. They were already heavily invested in strewing confusion about science, having spent decades defending a product that is lethal when used as directed. But no one was taking them seriously anymore, so they established a fake grassroots organization—an “Astroturf group”—called The Advancement of Sound Science Coalition (TASSC). They recruited other businesses, like oil companies, that had a stake in undermining public faith in science. Together, they started hiring and promoting willing scientists like Dr. S. Fred Singer, who was equally happy to argue for the safety of secondhand smoke or to deny that climate change was real.

A third denial campaign was started on behalf of the American Petroleum Institute in 1997 by spin doctors with experience denying everything from the dangers of tobacco (Steve Milloy, at the time the executive director of TASSC) to the hazards of ozone depletion (Candace Crandall, Fred Singer’s then-wife). The API’s “Global Climate Science Communication Action Plan” detailed how to take advantage of small newspapers and TV stations to spread disinformation. They recruited more scientists-for-hire and gave them media training and editorial support, promoted them as interview subjects, and distributed their skeptical articles widely.

The strategies are still popular, and many of the original players are still in the game. Industry pays more every year to promote climate confusion. An Astroturf group, the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity (ACCCE), spent between \$35 million and \$40 million for a huge campaign during the last presidential election. Some of the propaganda was obvious. You couldn’t watch the presidential debates without seeing “clean coal” ads. Other activity was less transparent. For example, the Hawthorn Group PR firm recruited and paid young people to wear bright white “clean coal” T-shirts and baseball caps to electoral rallies. They offered bonuses to anyone who got their photo taken with a

candidate and got it on the news.

For the debate over the Waxman-Markey climate change bill, ACCCE hired a D.C. Astroturf specialist called Bonner & Associates to generate fake grassroots opposition. Bonner employees got scripts directing them to hide who they were working for. (“Hi, I’m working with seniors/retirees to help stop their utility bills from doubling.”) They forged letters on purloined letterhead and sent them to Congress ahead of the vote. Congressman Markey’s office discovered the scripts and forgeries and continues to investigate.

In each of these cases, the funders actually admit their intent to confuse the public and undermine the credibility of legitimate scientists. They use Astroturf front groups because people know who not to trust: A recent poll showed that only 19 percent of people believe what corporations say about climate change.

The Greenpeace “Exxon Secrets” project, and similar groups, have documented other huge corporate investments in confusion and attacks on climate science. And the oil and gas industry keeps adding to the budget—in 2008, its expenditures on lobbying alone increased by 50 percent.

Neither the major media nor politicians are counterbalancing these campaigns. And that leaves a huge burden on you, the individual.

It also creates a great opportunity. People are crying out for leadership on this issue, and they would rather follow leaders they know. If you inform yourself and speak out, people will appreciate and emulate your example. If you call foul when you hear or see information being misused, your friends and colleagues will be grateful. And if you start demanding more from media, from business, and especially from government, others will applaud.

We can’t save the world from climate change with just a few lifestyle changes. We have to take back the public discourse. We could begin, for example, by demanding that think tanks like the Heartland Institute, which lobbies on behalf of tobacco



**JAMES HOGGAN** didn’t set out to write an indictment of public relations. He does PR for a living. But when he started looking into the climate controversy he’d heard so much about, he turned up a story of disinformation, scientists-for-hire, and a campaign orchestrated by members of his profession to keep the public in the dark about what the real science is on climate change. This book details where the lies are coming from, who’s paying for them, and who’s telling them—and gives us a professional’s advice on what we can do to stop the lies.

companies and against climate-change legislation, have to declare the source of their funding. We could demand that companies like Bonner & Associates have to acknowledge their clients—that all Astroturfers should declare when they are operating on behalf of self-interested corporations.

Climate change can be beaten, quickly and affordably. It’s time we all insisted that it be done. **Y**



James Hoggan is owner of the international PR firm Hoggan & Associates, chair of the David Suzuki Foundation, and author (with investigative journalist Richard Littlemore) of the new book, *Climate Cover-up: The Crusade to*

*Deny Global Warming.*



**THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN CLEAN ENERGY** or new technology. To get to a climate-friendly world, we have to overcome our own denial, press for government action, and make the changes now, wherever we live and work. The good news is that joining together to build real happiness promises us all a better life, while also saving the planet. No small thing.



## WHY WE FIND IT SO HARD TO ACT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

George Marshall

**I**t should be easy to deal with climate change. There is a strong scientific consensus supported by very sound data; consensus across much of the religious and political spectrum and among businesses including the largest corporations in the world. The vast majority of people claim to be concerned. The targets are challenging, but they are achievable with existing technologies, and there would be plentiful profits and employment available for those who took up the challenge.

So why has so little happened? Why do people who claim to be very concerned about climate change continue their high-carbon lifestyles? And why, as the warnings become ever louder, do increasing numbers of people reject

the arguments of scientists and the evidence of their own eyes?

These, I believe, will be the key questions for future historians of the unfurling climate disaster, just as historians of the Holocaust now ask: "How could so many good and moral people know what was happening and yet do so little?"

This comparison with mass human rights abuses is a surprisingly useful place to find some answers to these questions. In *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering*, Stanley Cohen studies how people living under repressive regimes resolve the conflict they feel between the moral imperative to intervene and the need to protect themselves and their families. He found that people deliberately maintain a level

of ignorance so that they can claim they know less than they do. They exaggerate their own powerlessness and wait indefinitely for someone else to act first—a phenomenon that psychologists call the passive bystander effect. Both strategies lie below the surface of most of the commonly held attitudes to climate change.

But most interesting is Cohen's observation that societies also negotiate collective strategies to avoid action. He writes: "Without being told what to think about (or what not to think about) societies arrive at unwritten agreements about what can be publicly remembered and acknowledged."

Dr. Kari Marie Norgaard of the University of California reaches a very similar conclusion, and argues that "denial of global warming is socially

constructed.” She observes that most people are deeply conflicted about climate change and manage their anxiety and guilt by excluding it from the cultural norms defining what they should pay attention to and think about—what she calls their “norms of attention.”

According to Norgaard, most people have tacitly agreed that it is socially inappropriate to pay attention to climate change. It does not come up in

politicians urge us to act. The impacts directly threaten our personal and local livelihoods. And, above all, it is our consumption and affluence that is causing it.

However, people have decided that they can keep climate change outside their “norms of attention” through a selective framing that creates the maximum distance. In opinion poll research the majority of people will

But its causes (mainly pollution from burning fossil fuels) led it to be bundled with the global “environmental” issues during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. From that point on it has been dealt with by environment ministers and environment departments, and talked about in the media by environmental reporters.

The issue was then championed

WHAT WE DO	WHY WE DO IT	WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT														
<b>DISTANCING</b>  “It’s a long way off.”  “The scientists still haven’t made up their minds.”  “It’s not illegal yet.”  “This isn’t the really important issue.”  “I already do lots of things for the environment.”	<table><tr><th>Our response is strongest to threats that are:</th><th>Climate Change is:</th></tr><tr><td>Visible</td><td>Invisible</td></tr><tr><td>With historical precedent</td><td>Unprecedented</td></tr><tr><td>Immediate</td><td>Drawn out</td></tr><tr><td>With simple causality</td><td>A result of complex causes</td></tr><tr><td>Caused by another “tribe”</td><td>Caused by all of us</td></tr><tr><td>Direct personal impacts</td><td>Unpredictable and has indirect personal impacts</td></tr></table>  Source: George Marshall, “The Psychology of Denial”	Our response is strongest to threats that are:	Climate Change is:	Visible	Invisible	With historical precedent	Unprecedented	Immediate	Drawn out	With simple causality	A result of complex causes	Caused by another “tribe”	Caused by all of us	Direct personal impacts	Unpredictable and has indirect personal impacts	  We recognize that information alone cannot produce change.  We openly recognize the tendency to denial.  We encourage emotional responses and “whistleblowers.”  We develop a culture of engagement that is visible, immediate, and urgent.  As individuals, we act with integrity and clarity.
Our response is strongest to threats that are:	Climate Change is:															
Visible	Invisible															
With historical precedent	Unprecedented															
Immediate	Drawn out															
With simple causality	A result of complex causes															
Caused by another “tribe”	Caused by all of us															
Direct personal impacts	Unpredictable and has indirect personal impacts															
<b>FALSE POSITIVITY</b>  “Call in the eggheads. They’ll fire mirrors into space or something.”  “The markets will sort it out.”  “Haven’t they solved it already?”  “Warming—sounds lovely. Bring it on.”																
<b>REACTIVE DENIAL AND PROJECTION</b>  “Aaaargh, I’ve got enough problems!”  “Don’t take away my toys.”  “Who are you to tell me what to do, you lentil-crunching weirdo?”  “It’s not me. It’s those other people ... (rich/poor/the Chinese)”	<p>define it as far away (“it’s a global problem, not a local problem”) or far in the future (“it’s a huge problem for future generations”). They embrace the tiny cluster of skeptics as evidence that “it’s only a theory,” and that “there is still a debate.” And they strategically shift the causes as far away as possible: “I’m not the problem—it’s the Chinese/rich people/corporations.” Here in Europe we routinely blame the Americans.</p> <p>In all of these examples, people have</p>	<p>by environmental campaigners who stamped it indelibly with the images of global wildlife and language of self abnegation that spoke to their own concerns. The current messaging of climate change—the polar bears, burning forests, calls to “live simply so others may simply live” and “go green to save the planet”—has been filtered through a minority ideology and worldview.</p> <p>Thus, within a few years, the issue</p>														

conversations, or as an issue in voting, consumption, or career choices. We are like a committee that has decided to avoid a thorny problem by conspiring to make sure that it never makes it onto the agenda of any meeting.

There are many different ways that the proximity of climate change could force itself onto our agendas. We already feel the impacts in our immediate environment. Scientists and

define it as far away (“it’s a global problem, not a local problem”) or far in the future (“it’s a huge problem for future generations”). They embrace the tiny cluster of skeptics as evidence that “it’s only a theory,” and that “there is still a debate.” And they strategically shift the causes as far away as possible: “I’m not the problem—it’s the Chinese/rich people/corporations.” Here in Europe we routinely blame the Americans.

In all of these examples, people have selected, isolated, and then exaggerated the aspects of climate change that best enable their detachment. And, ironically, focus-group research suggests that people are able to create the most distance when climate change is categorized as an “environmental” problem.

If we take a step back we can see that the impacts of climate change are so wide-ranging that it could equally well be defined as a major economic, military, agricultural, or social rights issue.

by environmental campaigners who stamped it indelibly with the images of global wildlife and language of self abnegation that spoke to their own concerns. The current messaging of climate change—the polar bears, burning forests, calls to “live simply so others may simply live” and “go green to save the planet”—has been filtered through a minority ideology and worldview.

Thus, within a few years, the issue had been burdened with a set of associations and metaphors that allowed the general public to exclude it from their primary concerns (“I’m not an environmentalist”), as could senior politicians (“environment is important but jobs and defense are my priority”).

Progressive civil society organizations also avoided the issue because of its environmental connotations. Two years ago I challenged a senior campaigner with Amnesty International, the world’s largest human rights



» organization, to explain why Amnesty did not mention climate change anywhere on its website. He agreed that it is an important issue but felt that Amnesty “doesn’t really do environmental issues.” In other words it was outside their “norms of attention.”

Far more aggressive responses that stigmatize environmentalists create further distance. In a 2007 interview, Michael O’Leary, CEO of Ryan Air, the world’s largest budget airline, said:

“The environmentalists are like the peace nutters in the 1970s. You can’t change the world by putting on a pair of dungarees or sandals. I listen to all this drivel about turning down the central heating, going back to candles, returning to the dark ages. It just panders to your middle-class, middle-aged angst and guilt. It is just another way of stealing things from hard-pressed consumers.”

O’Leary’s diatribe—which could be echoed by any number of right-wing commentators in the United States—plays further on the cultural norms theme. By defining climate change as an environmental issue that can be placed firmly in the domain of self-righteous killjoys who want to take away working people’s hard-earned luxuries, his message is clear: “People like us don’t believe this rubbish.”

But, as is so often the case with climate change, O’Leary is speaking to far more complex metaphors about freedom and choice. Climate change is invariably presented as an overwhelming threat requiring unprecedented restraint, sacrifice, and government intervention. The metaphors it invokes are poisonous to people who feel rewarded by free market capitalism and distrust government interference. It is hardly surprising that an October 2008 American Climate Values Survey showed that three times more Republicans than Democrats believe that “too much fuss is made about global warming.” Another poll by the Canadian firm Haddock Research showed half of Republicans refuse to believe that it is caused by humans.

This political polarization is occurring across the developed world and is a worrying trend. If a disbelief in climate change becomes a mark of someone’s political identity, it is far more likely to be shared between people who know and trust each other, becoming ever more entrenched and resistant to external argument.

This being said, climate change is a fast-moving field. Increasingly severe climate impacts will reinforce the theoretical warnings of scientists with far more tangible and immediate evidence. And looking back at history there are plentiful examples of times when public attitudes have changed suddenly in the wake of traumatic events—as with the U.S. entry into both world wars.

In the meantime there is an urgent need to increase both the level and quality of public engagement. To date most information has either been in the form of very dry top-down presentations and reports by experts or emotive, apocalyptic warnings by campaign groups and the media. The film *An Inconvenient Truth*, which sat somewhere between the two approaches, reinforced the existing avoidance strategies: that this was a huge and intractable global issue. The film was carried by the charm and authority of Al Gore, but this reliance on powerful celebrities also removes power from individuals who are, let us remember, all too willing to agree that there is no useful role they can play.

It is strange that climate communications seem to be so deeply embedded in this 19th-century public lecture format, especially in America, which leads the world in the study of personal motivation. Al Gore, after all, lost a political campaign against a far less qualified opponent whose advisors really understood the psychology of the American public.

How can we energize people and prevent them from passively standing by?

We must remember that people will only accept a challenging message if it

speaks to their own language and values and comes from a trusted communicator. For every audience these will be different: The language and values of a Lubbock Christian will be very different from those of a Berkeley Liberal. The priority for environmentalists and scientists should be to step back and enable a much wider diversity of voices and speakers.

We must recognize that the most trusted conveyors of new ideas are not experts or celebrities but the people we already know. Enabling ordinary people to take personal ownership of the issue and talk to each other in their own words is not just the best way to convince people, it is the best way to force climate change back into people’s “norms of attention.”

And finally we need to recognize that people are best motivated to start a journey by a positive vision of their destination—in this case by understanding the real and personal benefits that could come from a low-carbon world. However, it is not enough to prepare a slide show and glossy report vision that just creates more distance and plays to the dominant prejudice against environmental fantasists. People must see the necessary change being made all around them: buildings in entire neighborhoods being insulated and remodeled, electric cars in the driveway, and everywhere the physical adaptations we need to manage for the new weather conditions. If the U.S. government has one strategy, it should be to create such a ubiquity of visible change that the transition is not just desirable but inevitable. We need to emphasize that this is not some distant and intractable global warming, but a very local and rapid climate change, and we need to proclaim it from every solar-panel-clad rooftop. **Y**



**George Marshall** is founder of the Climate Outreach and Information Network ([coinet.org.uk](http://coinet.org.uk)). He is the author of *Carbon Detox: Your Step by Step Guide to Getting Real About Climate Change* ([carbondetox.org](http://carbondetox.org)) and posts articles on the psychology of climate change at [climatedenial.org](http://climatedenial.org).





PHOTO COURTESY THE REGENERATION PROJECT

## REV. CANON SALLY BINGHAM | CLIMATE HERO

For years, Sally Bingham wondered why her church wasn't providing moral guidance on climate change. One of the first directives in the Bible, Bingham says, is to care for creation. When God gave Adam dominion over the Earth, that meant responsibility to "till it and keep it." Bingham decided she had to bring this message to the pulpit. She left behind her life as a homemaker, enrolled in seminary, and became an Episcopal priest. In 1993, she founded **THE REGENERATION PROJECT**, which has helped more than 10,000 congregations around the country become greener and more energy-efficient, and spurred a faith-based movement in support of climate policy. *Interviewed by Kate Sheppard*

**How has climate change become an issue that religious communities are organizing around?** Until 10 years ago, clergy got no instruction in environmental ethics in seminary, but it has become evident that there aren't going to be any souls to save unless we save the land, air, and water. Now when you talk to religious people, it's like the light bulb goes on—if you love God, you better love Creation. Once you open that possibility, people get it.

**How do you get congregations to turn that understanding into action?** The first thing for somebody in a congregation to understand is that every one of their behaviors affects another person: the clothes they wear, the cars they drive, the coffee they drink, the energy they use. Once you've got that awareness, you'll put in energy-efficient appliances, you'll walk instead of driving, and

you won't create so much waste.

Greening the individual church, synagogue, or mosque is our first goal. When a clergyperson walks down the aisle and says, "This church is saving \$12,000 a year on energy bills," people go, "Whoa, I bet I could do that at home." The congregation serves as an example to the people in the pews.

**What's the role of the faith community in addressing the climate crisis?** The faith community didn't start out in a leadership role on this issue, but I think we're going to end up there. Now that the moral voice of religion is involved in this dialogue, things are going to happen. We saw that with the abolition of slavery, women's right to vote, and the civil rights movement. We're going to be the voice that tips the iceberg enough to make change happen. **y**

# Neighborhood Revolutions

More and More Towns are Making the Low-Carbon Transition. Has Yours?



*Olympia, Washington*

*Santa Cruz, California*

*Sandpoint, Idaho*

## Tara Lohan

**T**he coastal town of Lincoln City, Oregon, has a lot to lose if nothing is done about climate change. The town sits 11 feet above sea level, and unchecked climate change could erode its beaches or flood the town.

Residents are taking matters into their own hands. “We could ignore it, let the federal government deal with it,” Mayor Lori Hollingsworth says. “We’re not willing to do that.” Last year Lincoln City committed to becoming carbon neutral through renewable energy, energy efficiency, and offsets.

Communities like Lincoln City have long been ahead of Congress and the White House on climate commitments. Cities first began committing to Kyoto goals in 2005 through the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate

Protection Agreement. Now more than 1,000 cities have signed on. But the community climate movement goes beyond local government initiatives. It’s a cultural shift involving people at all levels of the community, from tiny rural towns in red states to major metropolitan areas.

### The Heart of Climate Action

The college town of Berea, Kentucky, one of the fastest growing communities in the state, is seeing its subdivisions expand and its farmland disappear. But one group of residents is making plans to help the community end its reliance on fossil fuels.

“We want to increase the resilience of our community in the face of all the threats—peak oil, climate change,

economic contraction, ecosystem decline, population growth—the whole list,” says Richard Olson, head of the Berea College Sustainability and Environmental Studies Program.

Berea locals have a goal they’re calling “50 x 25.” By 2025, they aim to have the town using 50 percent less energy, deriving 50 percent of the energy it does use from local sources, getting 50 percent of its food from farms and processors within 100 miles of town, and generating 50 percent of its gross domestic product from locally owned, independent businesses.

Berea is one of more than 40 U.S. communities that have become Transition Towns, a movement that started when British communities began looking for ways to move to low-carbon



economies. Transition Towns have formed a diffuse, grassroots network led by the individuals who are working to transform their own communities.

“What’s important, and I think different about the transition movement is that it pays attention to the inner transition as well as the outer,” says Carolyn Stayton, executive director of Transition U.S. and a member

and other communities, and reaching out to local government.

The key is to raise public awareness. “What we try to focus on is developing a positive vision of our preferred future,” says Olson.

A lecture on climate change may not appeal to everyone, but you can interest people in things like gardening, Olson says. “We talk to them

than 2,000, was leveled by a tornado in May 2007. Residents have decided to rebuild as green as they can. They’re requiring all city buildings to meet the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED Platinum rating for top-level environmentally friendly construction. They’ve also formed the group Greensburg GreenTown to increase public education about green living, make



*Berea, Kentucky*



*Houston, Texas*



*Denver, Colorado*

PHOTOS FROM TRANSITIONUS.ORG

of Transition Sebastopol in Northern California. Many Transition Towns have formed “Heart and Soul” working groups to “keep the community sensitive to the difficulty of making change,” says Stayton.

The Transition Town Berea group holds monthly “reskilling” workshops to help locals acquire the know-how to grow their own food, weatherize their houses, and install solar panels. Their projects help neighbors replant lawns with edibles and build raised vegetable beds. They’ve also auctioned rain barrels hand-painted by local artists and organized a “100 Mile Potluck” to celebrate local food and farmers.

### **From the Ground Up**

The Transition Towns movement in the United States is less than two years old, but it came from the seeds of earlier relocalization efforts and other community climate groups and nonprofits. The Towns have become successful by sharing training resources and experiences with existing groups

about heirloom seeds and what their grandparents grew and if they’d like to learn canning. We get them involved without even mentioning transition or sustainability.”

Transition Towns across the United States engage people in a variety of community projects—including a local currency project in south Whidbey Island, Washington; a car share program in Louisville, Colorado; a reskilling festival in Ann Arbor, Michigan; and local energy initiatives in West Marin, California.

Interest in climate-readiness is growing as more communities of all kinds realize they are vulnerable to climate change impacts. Austin, Texas, has an ambitious plan to make city facilities, vehicles, and operations carbon-neutral by 2020. Charlottesville, Virginia, is creating a trail system for walking and biking to connect schools, parks, and other public spaces. Chicago initiated a grant program to encourage the construction of green roofs.

Greensburg, Kansas, a city of fewer

resources available at the local library, and distribute educational materials through online and telephone classes and community events.

Green building initiatives are also spreading, thanks in part to Architecture 2030, a nonprofit based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The group sponsors the 2030 Challenge, which calls for an immediate 50 percent reduction in fossil-fuel consumption in new buildings and renovations, and sets a goal of carbon-neutral design by 2030. The U.S. Conference of Mayors adopted the 2030 Challenge in 2006.

These communities hope they can lead the way toward the big changes we’ll need nationally and internationally to respond to climate change. “Working at the community level to build resilience is the strategy that has the most chance of success,” says Olson. “It’s not going to take until our grandchildren’s generation to see if we’ve succeeded. I think in 10 years we’ll see if we’re going to have a chance.”

**Tara Lohan** is a senior editor at AlterNet and editor of the book *Water Consciousness*.





PAUL DUNN FOR YES! MAGAZINE



# What the Greatest Generation Knew:

## It's Not Sacrifice, It's the Good Life

Colin Beavan

So what do we do? That's the question—right?—when it comes to climate change. We know the problems. We even know the scientific solution: lowering atmospheric carbon to 350 parts per million.

Our obstacle is, in many ways, whether we in the United States have the cultural and political will to adopt the scientific solution. Because trying to pursue it presents a huge social obstacle. How do we learn to use fewer resources when our entire economy is built on using more?

The low-hanging fruit in climate change is energy efficiency—finding ways to use less. And here in these United States, because energy has been so cheap, our inefficiencies are grand. Fixing them might mean such massive cultural shifts as a lower reliance on automobiles and even—though it is still almost fringe to say it—a move away from a system that depends upon consumption for consumption's sake.

So what do we do when the problem is so big that it might only be solved if the entire nation is involved?

We engage the entire nation. We ask the people to be involved in finding the solutions to their own problems.

Think of World War II. Like climate change, it was a problem that could not be solved without the engagement of everyone. Thousands of political and cultural leaders recognized that. They saw that while top-down government action could promote individual dedication to the war effort, it was individual, bottom-up action that could rally the people around broader government action.

Today, we recall how soldiers left their farms, jobs, and families to enlist, and how, at home, parents grew food in “victory gardens” and folks volunteered to run scrap drives for rubber and steel. Think of the people who carpoled not because it was cheaper but because, as one public service poster said, “When you drive alone, you drive with Hitler.”

Citizens united around a solution, and the government pressed forward, secure in having the will of the people. »

At left: Colin Beavan and his family spent a year changing their lives for the environment. Their experiment is the subject of his book, *No Impact Man*, and a documentary film. Before his No Impact Project, he wrote historical nonfiction, including *Operation Jedburgh: D-Day and America's First Shadow War*.



## EAT YOUR VEGETABLES

**ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS STOP EATING BEEF.** Worldwide, beef production contributes more to climate change than the entire transportation sector. The carbon footprint of the average meat eater is about 1.5 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> larger than that of a vegetarian. Cutting beef out of your diet will reduce your CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2,400 pounds annually.



## DRINK FROM THE TAP

**YOU CAN SAVE MONEY AND YOUR ENVIRONMENT BY GIVING UP BOTTLED WATER.** The production of plastic water bottles together with the privatization of our drinking water is an environmental and social catastrophe. Bottled water costs more per gallon than gasoline. The average American consumes 30 gallons of bottled water annually. Giving up one bottle of imported water means using up one less liter of fossil fuel and emitting 1.2 pounds less of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.



## OBSERVE AN ECO-SABBATH

**FOR ONE DAY OR AFTERNOON OR EVEN ONE HOUR A WEEK, DON'T BUY ANYTHING,** don't use any machines, don't switch on anything electric, don't cook, don't answer your phone, and, in general, don't use any resources. In other words, for this regular period, give yourself and the planet a break. Every hour per week that you live no impact cuts your carbon emissions by 0.6 percent annually. Commit to four hours per week, that's 2.4 percent; do it for a whole day each week to cut your impact by 14.4 percent a year.



## TITHE A FIXED PERCENTAGE OF YOUR INCOME

**TITHE A FIXED PERCENTAGE OF YOUR INCOME TO NON-PROFITS OF YOUR CHOICE.** If an average U.S. family contributes 1 percent (\$502.33) of its annual income (\$50,233) to an environmental non-profit, they could offset 40.7 tons of carbon dioxide per year. Many of our public health and welfare services are tied to consumer spending which, in turn, depends upon planetary resources. If you want to help, don't go shopping. Just help.

## COLIN BEAVAN'S BEST BETS FOR POWERING CULTURAL CHANGE

# 10 WAYS TO







5

### BUILD A COMMUNITY

**HAVE DINNERS WITH FRIENDS.** Play charades. Sing together. Enjoying each other costs the planet much less than enjoying its resources.

8



### TAKE YOUR PRINCIPLES TO WORK

**WE MUST ACT AS THOUGH WE CARE ABOUT THE WORLD AT WORK AS MUCH AS WE DO AT HOME.** Company CEOs or product designers have the power to make a gigantic difference through their business, and so do the rest of us. In commercial buildings, lighting accounts for more than 40 percent of electrical energy use, a huge cause of greenhouse gas production. Using motion and occupancy sensors can cut this use by 10 percent.

# CHANGE YOUR LIFE

*(Not Just Your Light Bulbs)*

6



### GET THERE UNDER YOUR OWN STEAM

**GET AROUND BY BIKE OR BY FOOT A CERTAIN NUMBER OF DAYS A MONTH.** Not only does this mean using less fossil fuel and creating less greenhouse gases, it means you'll get exercise and we'll all breathe fewer fumes. If you can stay off the road just two days a week, you'll reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 1,590 pounds per year.



9

### DONATE A DAY'S TV TIME TO ECO-SERVICE

**TAKE ONE DAY OFF FROM TV**—the average American watches four and a half hours of TV a day—and try voluntary eco-service instead. Those four and a half hours a day watching TV add up to 825 pounds of carbon dioxide each year.



7

### COMMIT TO NOT WASTING

**WASTING RESOURCES COSTS THE PLANET AND YOUR WALLET.** Let your clothes hang-dry instead of using the dryer. Take half the trips but stay twice as long. Repair instead of rebuy. The list goes on. In the summer, for every degree above 72°F you set your thermostat, you save 120 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year, and if you wash your clothes with cold water you can cut your laundry energy use by up to 90 percent.

10

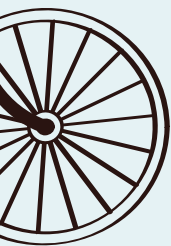


### BELIEVE WITH ALL YOUR HEART THAT HOW YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

**WE ARE ALL INTERCONNECTED.** Every step toward living a conscious life provides support to everyone else who is trying to do the same thing—whether you're aware of it or not. We are the masters of our destinies.

Author Colin Beavan is founder of the No Impact Project, [noimpactproject.org](http://noimpactproject.org). His book *No Impact Man* was published in 2009 by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

[www.YesMagazine.org/posters](http://www.YesMagazine.org/posters) to buy or download a poster



» Climate is like that, too. If individuals can be inspired to change their lives to help propel the necessary cultural shift, then it is likely that more and more of them will lend their political will to government action that supports their individual efforts.

How, though, do we engage the people?

What we tend to remember from the World War II era are the sacrifices made by the Greatest Generation. What was perhaps more important, though, was their aspiration and ambition. People did not rally to the moan of sacrifice but to the call for victory. Heroic leaders at every level

that people are best served by ever-increasing spending and material and energy use? Might we not be happier if our system emphasized health, happiness, and security? Might we not be happier if it emphasized the joys, for example, we get out of spending time with the people we love and using our highest God-given talents? Might we not be happier in a system where doing what we believe is right is rewarded more than looking out for number one?

What if environmental organizations shifted their resources just slightly from the halls of Congress to the sidewalks of the people? What if

change? Would riding your bike or walking to work be a more fun way to live life? Would getting together to sing at Christmas be better than paying off credit card bills for presents no one wants? In other words, we can be part of this change by inspiring ourselves to look, on a wide scale, for ways of life that are better both for us and for our planet.

To that end, a small group of us have established NoImpactProject.org, an organization with a mission to empower citizens to make choices that improve their lives and lower their environmental impact through lifestyle change, community action, and

## WHAT IF ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS SHIFTED THEIR RESOURCES JUST SLIGHTLY FROM THE HALLS OF CONGRESS TO THE SIDEWALKS OF THE PEOPLE?

helped them understand that, by working together, they could be more. The world could be more. Our lives could be more.

We must strive for that era's ambition and aspiration, the deeply held belief that each person's efforts matter. Back then, people envisioned a better world, and they felt confident that how they chose to live their lives could contribute to it.

The environmental movement should do the same. Environmental organizations concerned with climate change largely devote their resources to lobbying for good policies and to massive collective actions demonstrating support for those policies. And we need that. But why not also engage people in individual change, and rally them, World War II-style, to support the ways of living that those policies encourage?

Let's urge people to think deeply about the purpose of their own lives, and whether our current culture enables those purposes.

Are we as happy as we could be, living in a system based on the idea

we engaged people in these questions and encouraged in them an ambition toward a better way of life? What if we took on these priorities for ourselves whether we're encouraged to or not?

Sadly, it is currently out of vogue to discuss the importance of individual action in the environmental movement. The idea that an individual can't make a difference ignores the mechanics of social change. Individuals, acting together, can shift the culture and bring about the political change we need.

How can we all be part of the

participation in environmental politics. Through the No Impact Project's joint effort with the Huffington Post, in October more than 4,700 people tried it for a week. But this is just one effort. We need more.

Sound radical? Perhaps, but no more radical than the thought that individuals growing their own veggies and sharing rides to work could help achieve victory during a world war. And perhaps, if we join together to solve our climate problems, we may just find a way to better lives for all of us at the same time. 🌱



### The "Climate Action" Resource Guide

The information and links you need to find out more.  
[www.YesMagazine.org/resourceguide52](http://www.YesMagazine.org/resourceguide52)

### The "Climate Action" Discussion Guide

Get a group together and have a conversation.  
[www.YesMagazine.org/discuss52](http://www.YesMagazine.org/discuss52)

## FROM THE PUBLISHER



**YOU ASKED FOR IT, YOU GOT IT: A VIEW EACH DAY THROUGH THE YES! LENS OF POWERFUL IDEAS AND PRACTICAL ACTIONS THAT CAN TRANSFORM OUR WORLD.**

## Now, a “YES! Take” Every Day

I HAVE GREAT NEWS FOR YOU.

For years, in surveys, focus groups, and conversations, you, our readers, have told us that you love YES! Magazine, and you like seeing the world through the YES! lens, but you want to get that perspective far more often. We have heard you.

I'm delighted to announce we are now offering what you've been asking for. Under Executive Editor Sarah van Gelder's direction, we're complementing your quarterly magazine with an online “YES! take” on the news every day. Now you can get the YES! perspective in real time, as news breaks and new possibilities emerge.

Don't have time to visit our website every day? Then sign up for our new free weekly email highlighting our best stories each week. That will keep you up on our fresh daily news, commentary, videos, photo essays, and podcasts on five of the biggest topics of our time:

**Planet.** We are focusing particularly on the urgent issue of climate change. We bring you news of the social movements, policies, local actions, and lifestyle changes that offer us all the most hope. You can also find tips on green living and news on what is happening with water conservation, sustainable food systems, and the development of more walkable, liveable cities and towns.

**New Economy.** We know the Wall-Street-based economy is not serving us

well, but what's the alternative? YES! is where you find the people creating the new economy. You'll get David Korten's latest insights, and news of the thriving co-op movement, innovations in how we measure progress, the “go local” phenomenon, green jobs, and ways to reinvent our money system.

**Peace and Justice.** Despite the ongoing wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and many other hot spots, this is an exciting time for progress in peace. At YesMagazine.org, you'll find news on nuclear disarmament, non-violent movements against oppression, and progress in building a peaceful, post-empire world. The YES! coverage links prospects for peace, at home and abroad, with the requirements for justice and healing. So you'll find stories on alternatives to prison, healing from violence-induced trauma, securing human rights, and indigenous leadership.

**People Power.** How do “we the people” get a say, especially in a world so dominated by corporate interests? YES! is covering efforts to pry the media loose from the control of the media giants, news of the best innovations for clean and fair elections, and grassroots victories for policies and programs that benefit everyone.

**Happiness.** Real happiness doesn't have to cost the planet. As evidenced in our “happiness” issue of YES!, we bring you stories of community build-

ing, family life, spiritual insights, the arts, and other practical steps people are taking to live the good life while living lightly on the Earth.

You asked for it, you got it: A view each day through the YES! lens of powerful ideas and practical actions that can transform our world. We place all our articles in the “Creative Commons” so you can spread YES! stories widely without worrying about copyright. If you blog, use Facebook or Twitter, or maintain an email list, repost our articles—just credit us and link back to our site. Or send a friend a link to an article that struck a chord with you.

Reaching out to others is an important part of shifting our culture toward sustainability, justice, and compassion.

In this fluid time of change, the story we carry in our heads about what is possible determines a lot about what actually happens. That's why we're eager to provide you with evidence every day of the positive possibilities emerging on every front. Thank you for being part of creating the new stories that can help us all make the transition to a vibrant, healthy world.

**Fran Korten**, Publisher

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YES! Magazine is published by the Positive Futures Network, an independent, nonprofit organization supporting people's active engagement in creating a just, sustainable, and compassionate world. The work of the Positive Futures Network is to give visibility and momentum to signs of an emerging society in which life, not money, is what counts; in which everyone matters; and in which vibrant, inclusive communities offer prosperity, security, and meaningful ways of life.

## FEATURED PARTNERS ::

At YES! Magazine we work with hundreds of organizations that are building a just and sustainable world. We develop special partnerships with some to help each of us reach more people. Here are three partner organizations whose work we think you'll want to know about.



**350.ORG** is an international climate campaign named after the most important number in the world. According to the latest science, 350 parts per million is the safe upper limit

of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. On October 24, 350.org coordinated an International Day of Climate Action with over 5,200 events in more than 181 countries, from the melting glaciers of Mt. Everest to the sinking beaches of the Maldives. 350.org continues to connect a truly global movement and call for bold solutions to the climate crisis. [www.350.org](http://www.350.org)



**GREEN FOR ALL** is a national organization dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans through a clean-energy economy. Green For All works in collaboration with the

business, government, labor, and grassroots communities to create and implement programs that increase quality jobs and opportunities in green industry—all while holding the most vulnerable people at the center of its agenda. [www.greenforall.org](http://www.greenforall.org)



**BAREFOOT COLLEGE OF TILONIA** began in 1972 in Tilonia, a village in the semi-arid region of Rajasthan, India, with the conviction that solutions to rural problems lie within the community. The College trains villagers to become "Barefoot" professionals: solar engineers,

water engineers, architects, teachers, midwives. Their commitment to community-based solutions is expanding globally and has resulted in rural solar-electrification benefiting nearly 200,000 people in over 750 communities. [www.barefootcollege.org](http://www.barefootcollege.org)

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## YES! PICKS ::

### Things To Do, Places To Go

#### State of the World Forum

*February 28–March 3, in Washington, DC.* The second in a series, this 2020 Climate Leadership Campaign event will highlight the work of diverse environmental justice advocates worldwide. [www.worldforum.org](http://www.worldforum.org)

#### Creating Change Conference

*February 3–7, in Dallas, TX.* Join 2,000 LGBT advocates and allies, working for full equality, social justice, and dignity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the United States. Produced by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, this annual gathering, now in its 22nd year, offers participants a chance to develop and hone leadership skills, celebrate victories, and build community. [www.thetaskforce.org](http://www.thetaskforce.org)

#### US Social Forum

*June 22–26 in Detroit, MI.* Modeled after social forum gatherings around the world, the US Social Forum is a movement-building process, bringing together representatives from a wide variety of social change organizations and community groups. In self-designed workshops, the attendees—including young people, people of color, workers, veterans, educators, and artists—develop bottom-up solutions to the economic and ecological crises we face. Groups are encouraged to join working groups and consider workshop proposals as early as possible. [www.ussf2010.org](http://www.ussf2010.org)

[www.YesMagazine.org/events](http://www.YesMagazine.org/events)

For an expanded listing of upcoming events

## SUPPORTING YES! MAGAZINE ::

### REMEMBERING THOMAS B. KEEHN (1915-2009)

*"Tom Keehn was a dear friend and colleague, who introduced me to many influential leaders engaged in third world development and was a rich source of guidance in my work. He was a faithful supporter of YES! Magazine. We will miss him." —David Korten*



PHOTO BY DEV BENEGAL

**W**E ARE PLEASED TO HONOR THE LIFE of Thomas B. Keehn, a Dedicated Friend of YES! Magazine, who died recently at the age of 93.

In the 1950s, Tom and his family went to India to promote economic development. There, he became a promoter and collector of early modern Indian art and a friend of many Indian artists. Tom and his wife, Martha, had six children; four were born in India.

After returning to the United States, Tom became president of World Education, where he championed the education of women and girls in the developing world. In the 1980s, he helped found InterAction, an organization that helps humanitarian aid groups coordinate their work.

As an ordained Congregational minister, he performed more than 40 weddings for family and friends, including current treasury secretary Timothy Geithner.

In 2000 he published *India Ink*, featuring letters Martha wrote home from India and art he and Martha collected there.

We honor Tom's lifetime of making the world a better place, and are proud to have been able to count Tom Keehn as a Dedicated Friend.

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The Velcrow Ripper DVD *Fierce Light: When Spirit Meets Action*



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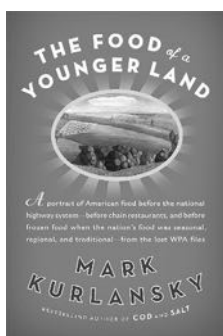
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# America's Recipe Box

Author Mark Kurlansky unearths a Depression-era project to document the country's food traditions



## The Food of a Younger Land

MARK KURLANSKY

Riverhead Books, 2009, 416 pages, \$27.95

REVIEWED BY LAURA KALIEBE

Squirrel mulligan, scrambled poke greens, ash cakes and cherry bounce: a menu to tempt the early-20th-century Southerner.

And maybe even the modern foodie.

Out of the annals of Americana, food writer Mark Kurlansky pulls these and other recipes for *The Food of a Younger Land*. With a selection of short stories, poems, letters, and lists from the unfinished Federal Writers' Project book *America Eats*, Kurlansky's book documents what Americans of the 1940s cooked in their kitchens, restaurants, and the great outdoors.

*The Food of a Younger Land* offers an anthropological look at regional cuisine before the country's landscape was dotted with restaurant chains offering the same fare from Portland, Oregon, to Portland, Maine. Lumberjacks, threshers, and pioneers, each with their own foods and customs, populate the book. Kurlansky details

forgotten food traditions, such as Alabama foot washings, and longtime food debates, such as whether to crush the mint in a Kentucky mint julep.

As Kurlansky notes in the book's introduction, "The Depression had awakened in Americans a deep interest in the country and for the first time in its history it was becoming fashionable to examine and look for the meaning of America and what it was to be American."

The stories for *America Eats* were the result of a national effort to get the unemployed working again. As part of the Emergency Relief Act of 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and charged it with the task of finding work for millions of unemployed Americans. The WPA's Federal Writers' Project published books, employing the country's out-of-work writers—a catchall term that included

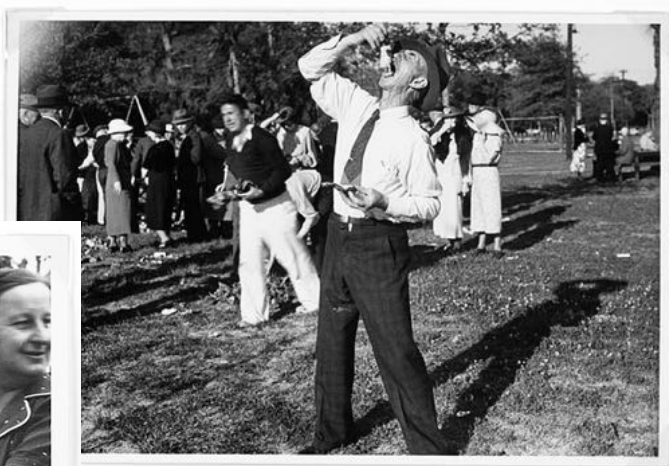
advertising copywriters and secretaries, as well as authors such as Zora Neale Hurston and Eudora Welty. At its peak in April 1936, the Federal Writers' Project employed 6,686 people.

Katherine Kellock, a writer-turned-WPA administrator, envisioned *America Eats* as a book on "American cookery and the part it has played in the national life, as exemplified in the group meals that preserve not only traditional dishes but also traditional attitudes and customs."

But the deadline for copy was set at the end of November 1941, and when Pearl Harbor was bombed days later, files were left in disarray, and *America Eats* was never edited or published. In May 1942 the Federal Writers' Project became the Writers' Unit of the War Services, which produced military guides and history. The Works Progress Administration officially shut down in 1943.







LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PHOTOS  
FROM WPA AMERICA EATS FILES

From the raw *America Eats* manuscripts—many without a byline—stacked in the U.S. Library of Congress, Kurlansky says he selected “not always the best,” but the most interesting pieces.

Appropriately, many of the pieces selected for the book center around the mythology of food—the book details the origins of everything from hush puppies to Waldorf salad. Brunswick stew, named for a Virginia county, is lent a legendary quality by writer Eudora Ramsay Richardson: “The lazy fellow, whose talents were not culinary, dumped into one pot all the provisions, including the squirrels that had just been killed. So, a miracle was wrought.”

Kurlansky’s introductions manage to touch on a wide range of topics, from the pre-Civil-Rights-era South to global warming. He clarifies the original text, points out contradictions among pieces, and highlights facts that are both surprising and humorous: “The Minnesota story...made the dubious claim that the slimy gelatinous fish [lutefisk] ‘could safely be counted on to appeal to even the most finicky appetite.’ The Wisconsin essay, with more candor, asserted, ‘Nobody

likes lutefisk at first.”

*The Food of a Younger Land* also illustrates the ways America has changed since the 1940s—and in doing so, it documents the things that haven’t. That Southern menu of squirrel mulligan (a stew), scrambled poke greens (the first salad of spring), ash cakes (cakes baked in the ashes of the hearth), and cherry bounce (a whiskey and cherry drink of plantation origins) may sound foreign to many readers, but modern variations of the recipes can be found online and are still being prepared in kitchens across the South.

Yet *The Food of a Younger Land*, like *America Eats* before it, lacks a distinct conclusion. The sudden transition from “Oklahoma City’s Famous Suzi-Q Potatoes” to an informal bibliography is jarring and adds to the already chaotic nature of the book.

As a whole, the book is an enjoyable glimpse back in time. From fried grunion to persimmon pudding, the foods of 1940s America were as diverse as its people. **Y**

Laura Kaliebe is a Seattle-based writer.

[www.YesMagazine.org/spoon-bread](http://www.YesMagazine.org/spoon-bread)

Recipes for spoon bread and stuffed eggs

## YES! PICKS ::

Musical inspiration while putting out this issue



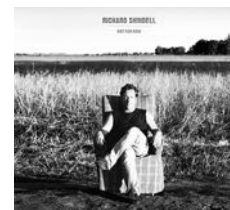
### Townes

Steve Earle’s latest album revisits some of the most iconic songs of Townes Van Zandt. These covers seem less fresh exploration than a friendly eulogy. Earle channels Van Zandt’s storytelling with precision, and yet manages to lean into the songs just enough to remind you it’s Earle. And in the end, the world can never have too many versions of “To Live is to Fly.”



### Idjagiedas

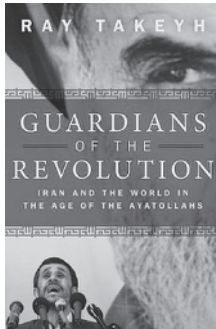
The songs of Norwegian Sami rights activist and folk musician Mari Boine tend toward haunting, all the more hypnotic for being performed in her native language. Songs mix traditional folk songs and instrumentation of the North Sami native culture with more modern rock influences.



### Not Far Now

Masterful folk artist Richard Shindell’s first original album since 2004 includes songs set in his adopted home of Argentina. This long-awaited, partly fan-financed album does not disappoint.

Have a listen at  
[www.YesMagazine.org/music](http://www.YesMagazine.org/music)



## Guardians of the Revolution

RAY TAKEYH

Oxford University Press, 2009, 328 pages,  
\$27.95

REVIEWED BY JOHN FEFFER

Of all the relationships between the United States and its adversaries, the rift with Iran appears to be particularly long, deep, and difficult to repair. Iran's seizure of U.S. diplomats just after the 1979 revolution, its attempted export of Islamic fundamentalism, and its sponsorship of global terrorism inevitably brought the new Islamic republic into conflict with Washington. A member of what George W. Bush called the "axis of evil," Iran has also been accused of meddling behind the scenes in Iraq and building a secret nuclear weapons program. If that weren't enough, the government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad manipulated last June's elections and has cracked down hard on pro-democracy advocates.

However, Iran and the United States do not have to remain eternal enemies. So argues Ray Takeyh, an Iranian-born scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations, in his useful and engaging new book, *Guardians of the Revolution*. Over its 30-year history, the Islamic Republic has reached out to the United States as part of a larger, pragmatic shift in foreign policy. America, for its part, has consistently failed to respond. The result, Takeyh argues, has been a tragedy for Iran, the region, and the United States.

*Guardians of the Revolution* traces the development of the Islamic Repub-

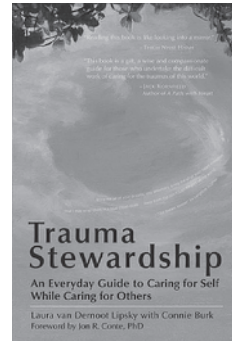
lic from its birth in the 1979 revolution to the rise of the reformers and eventually to their eclipse by new conservatives like Ahmadinejad. As happens with revolutionary states, Iran inevitably moved toward greater pragmatism. It built close relations with Russia and China and eventually buried the hatchet with the Sunni-led governments of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

But the best example of diplomatic pragmatism has involved the United States. Under the reformist administration of Muhammad Khatami, Tehran played a constructive role during the first Gulf War and helped win the release of American hostages in Lebanon. Later, Khatami was one of the first world leaders to send condolences after 9/11. Subsequently, Tehran sided with Washington in its war against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

In return, Iran received little more than harsh rhetoric and a flawed containment policy. Washington remained too focused on Iran as an avowed enemy of Israel and supporter of Islamic insurgents in the region. As Takeyh points out, however, a more imaginative U.S. policy of engagement, through "dialogue, compromise, and commerce" could provide Iran incentives to commit to regional stability.

Instead of containing Iran, the United States should acknowledge the country's influence and work to channel it in peaceful and stabilizing ways. Takeyh notes that Iran is key to any plan to stabilize Afghanistan and Iraq. Indeed, a future regional security framework will require the kind of cooperation between Iran and Iraq that Germany and France, also once dire enemies, provide for Europe. The United States helped bring Germany and France together. With an avowed pragmatist in the White House, the United States could play the same matchmaking role in the Middle East—if it listens to the advice of Ray Takeyh.

**John Feffer** is co-director of Foreign Policy in Focus at the Institute for Policy Studies.



## Trauma Stewardship

LAURA VAN DERNOOT LIPSKY

Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009, 264 pages,  
\$19.95

REVIEWED BY RINKU SEN

For years following 9/11, I reported on immigrant workers who had lost dozens of colleagues at the World Trade Center's Windows on the World restaurant.

Depressed, anxious, and jobless, they nevertheless founded the Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York (ROC-NY), understanding that restaurant workers needed power in addition to charity.

Historically, trauma makes people less empathetic and more individualistic. For good to come out of it requires people who are self-aware enough to get past their own reactions. In the ROC story, those people were a former waiter and a professional organizer.

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky would call them trauma stewards. For Lipsky, stewardship goes beyond recognizing secondary trauma (the collateral damage we absorb in helping others cope) to describe the management of troubles that have been entrusted to us. She illuminates the cycle of reaction to trauma exposure—feeling that we can never do enough, and ultimately trying to avoid the people for whom we claim to be working.

The book culminates in a daily practice for the reader. *Trauma Stewardship* is for anyone who stays close to the ground as they help to change that landscape.

**Rinku Sen** is publisher of *ColorLines* magazine.



## The Yes Men Fix the World

Directed by Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno, 2009, 87 min.

REVIEWED BY YORAM BAUMAN

"IRAQ WAR ENDS" declared *The New York Times*. "Nationalized Oil to Fund Climate Change Efforts" proclaimed another headline.

The edition reached thousands on the streets of Manhattan last year. Caught on film were shocked commuters.

"Is this real?" one woman asked the camera.

As the security guards outside the Times building made clear, the answer was no. The paper was the work of the Yes Men, filming the climactic scene in their latest movie.

A follow-up to *The Yes Men* (2003), *The Yes Men Fix the World* stars Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno as they land TV interviews and speaking gigs by impersonating executives from a parade of corporate baddies like Dow Chemical, Exxon, and Halliburton. Bichlbaum and Bonanno engage in entertaining corporate sabotage by weaseling onto the world stage with fake websites, creative hairstyles, and a deep faith in the First Amendment.

The challenge, of course, is how the Yes Men plan to make their dream

world come true, and here the movie is disappointingly superficial. Through interviews with "free marketeers," the Yes Men emphasize the evils of corporate greed. But in a segment about post-Katrina New Orleans, it becomes evident that government—even a government led by Barack Obama rather than George W. Bush—doesn't work so great, either.

Although the Yes Men don't show it, there is a middle ground. We can't tackle climate change, for example, by nationalizing the oil industry—the phony *Times* headline is amusing, but does anybody really want the government drilling for oil?—but we can use market-based instruments like carbon taxes or cap-and-trade systems.

Hopefully this message will be part of the mobilization campaign that the Yes Men are working on for the Copenhagen climate conference next month. With this film, they manage to amuse us, and perhaps even motivate us along the way.

**Yoram Bauman** is an environmental economist and stand-up comedian in Seattle. His forthcoming book is *The Cartoon Introduction to Economics*.



[www.YesMagazine.org/films52](http://www.YesMagazine.org/films52)  
Watch the trailers

## YES! PICKS ::

Maddening and motivating independent films

### Fresh

Directed by Ana Sofia Joanes, 2009, 72 min.

The evocative images of American family farms and candid interviews with the people who run them emphasize the mantra for *Fresh*: "Eat local." Most viewers probably know that already, but the cinematography and feel-good message will make you want to run out and start a garden today. Look for Will Allen of *Growing Power*, featured in the spring 2009 issue of YES! Magazine.

### Homo Toxicus

Bullfrog Films, 2008, 88 min.

What would you do if you knew how many toxins were in your body? In her documentary *Homo Toxicus*, Canadian filmmaker Carole Poliquin learns that her blood contains 110 toxins. So she sets out to visit communities exposed to pollution across Canada, from Montreal to Nunavut, and realizes she is one of the lucky ones.



## Keep the YES! Voice Going for Decades

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## YES! BUT HOW?

IF YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR PRACTICAL WAYS TO LIVE SUSTAINABLY, JUST ASK US.

Send questions to YES! But How?, 284 Madrona Way NE, Suite 116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110 or to [editors@yesmagazine.org](mailto:editors@yesmagazine.org)

### OUT OF THE RAIN

*I bike to work, and with winter approaching, I want to stay as dry as possible. But what kind of hazardous chemicals are in my waterproof gear?*

Let's be honest: Getting drenched is safer for both you and the planet than donning most protective clothing.

Waterproof fabrics are usually coated in synthetic plastic resins. Because the waterproofing agents are not chemically bonded to the fabric, they easily escape into the environment. Your body absorbs them via skin contact with your gear, as well as through polluted air, water, and food. A buildup of these toxins in your body can contribute to various health problems. Many waterproof sprays also contain toxic chemicals and can persist in the environment for generations.

The acronyms to watch out for: PTFE, PFOA, PFC, and the most prevalent of all, PVC. The versatile polyvinyl chloride, commonly known as vinyl, is used in all kinds of products, and is the first ingredient to avoid in rain gear. Scientists and government organizations recognize PVC as one of the most toxic plastics ever made.

Scientists say PVC never stops emitting toxic gases, is linked to cancer, and harms the immune, hormone, and reproductive systems. Phthalates,

used with PVC for material flexibility, should be avoided for similar reasons. PVC processing also releases poisonous dioxins that contaminate our air and groundwater.

PVC is resistant to oil, chemicals, and the elements, and is not biodegradable or recyclable. It even contaminates other plastics. Keep in mind that the smell of a new raincoat comes from the toxins escaping into the air and your lungs. PVC vinyl in clothing typically looks like shiny plastic but isn't always obvious, so check tags.

Perfluorinated compounds, PFCs, linger in the environment and like PVC have been linked to hormone and reproductive problems and cancer. PFCs also make up the nonstick coatings in cookware.

Polytetrafluoroethylene, PTFE, and the fluorosurfactant PFOA are lasting environmental pollutants used in some protective gear.

Nylon and polyester rain gear and rubber boots are safer bets. Go without waterproof rain gear if you can, and remember some woolen fabrics, especially tweeds and Navajo weaves along with most synthetic fleece blends repel water naturally. —K.H.

### THE NEW PLASTIC

*Is there any plastic container that's safe for food and drink? I have a baby, and most products*

### Our Issue 52 researchers

After YES!, **Heather Purser** is ready to dive professionally and begin harvesting geoducks. (And thanks to her internship, she feels a little funny about the whole thing now.) **Keeley Harding** plans to continue painting portraits and to start a new relationship with the Earth through WWOOF—World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms.



SUSIE SHUTTS FOR YES! MAGAZINE

Heather Purser

Keeley Harding

*for infants and children are plastic.*

Plastic utensils, dishes, and storage containers designed for both children and adults are ubiquitous.

Take beverage containers, for instance. Bisphenol A (BPA), the main component of polycarbonate plastic, leaches from several of the most popular and affordable brands of baby bottles, sippy cups, and water bottles when they are heated.

BPA is believed to be a threat to the health of infants and children, and has been banned in Canada. In the United States, Minnesota and Connecticut have banned it,

and Congress is considering regulating BPA with the proposed Ban Poisonous Additives Act.

Products made with BPA are lightweight, clear, and can withstand high temperatures. But scientists from the Japan Neuroscience Society, the University of Cincinnati, Yale, and the University of Missouri-Columbia have found that BPA levels lower than those found in children's plastic products are linked to a number of diseases and illnesses, including breast cancer, testicular cancer, reproductive deformities, and neurological defects.

Some 95 percent of baby bottles—almost every major brand—contain potentially

## YES! PICKS ::

### Homemade Gift Bags

EACH HOLIDAY SEASON, CONSUMERS cart home their purchases and wrap gifts in 4 million tons of shopping bags and wrapping paper. And since most wrapping paper contains non-paper additives, all this waste ends up in a landfill.

Why not avoid paper gift-wrap and make your own gift bags? It's a fun activity to do with your kids, friends or family members. And unlike traditional wrapping paper, gift bags don't require the use of tape and can be re-gifted, re-used and enjoyed for years to come.

It's not as hard as you might think. Making a few of these bags requires about an hour of your time, some basic materials, and a small amount of creativity.

You need: a sharp pair of scissors, some needles and thread, a ruler, and fabric.

You can look around your house for old sheets or something else that would work, or go to your local crafts store and pick out your favorite holiday pattern.

Clear an area and lay out all your tools. Place the gift you're wrapping in the center of the fabric and look at how much you'll need to cover the item completely. Then cut your fabric to the size you need, fold it in half and stitch two sides. Leave the bag as is, bunch the top with cloth ribbon, or hem the top, leaving a hole to push through a drawstring.—H.P.

unsafe levels of BPA, according to the National Toxicology Program and The National Institutes of Health. Consumer concern has prompted several manufacturers and retailers to provide their customers with BPA-free alternatives that cost little more than the polycarbonate versions.

Some companies, such as Green to Grow, Earthlust, and BornFree, provide only BPA-free products.

You can check the bottom of your bottles and containers to determine whether they are BPA-free. Avoid those with the number 7 or the letters "PC" in or near the recycling triangle, which mean that the item

was made with polycarbonate plastic. And if the plastic is transparent, whether colored or clear, it most likely contains BPA. Glass or stainless steel bottles, sippy cups, and other products are safer alternatives.

A handful of Web sites evaluate and rate products for safety. Check out [zrecommends.com](http://zrecommends.com), [treehugger.com](http://treehugger.com), and [thedailygreen.com](http://thedailygreen.com). —H.P.



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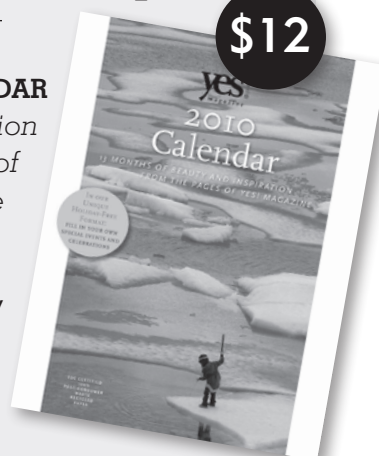
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## UPDATE

HAS THE PROMISE OF THE STORIES WE'VE  
PUBLISHED TURNED INTO REALITY?



PHOTO COURTESY WOMANSHARE

Womanshare members participate in Taking Action, a group that meets to discuss politics and gets involved in demonstrations.

## Womanshare deals in skills, community

**12 YEARS AGO ...** YES! wrote about Womanshare, a grassroots group that allows members to exchange services for time, not money. Founded by and for women in 1991, this New York City non-profit organization aims to build a strong alliance of members who seek to live more altruistically while learning new skills. Each Womanshare member has a “time bank” account for hours earned through helping others. A woman who teaches kickboxing for an hour, for example, can bank that hour for a future back massage or home repairs.

**TODAY ...** Despite financial hardships and organizational struggles, Womanshare has remained a nonprofit grassroots “community of friends,” said Jane Wilson, the group’s co-founder. The 40 or so members still exchange services and have become more active in groups formed around common interests.

Recently Womanshare members formed Taking Action, an environmental and political discussion

group. They write letters to elected officials and participate in marches and demonstrations.

In 2007, Womanshare partnered with Community Connections, a larger time bank operated by the Visiting Nurse Service of New York. The partnership provided Womanshare with much needed structural support, as well as the opportunity for members to exchange services within a larger community. Womanshare members now have accounts in the Community Connections time bank and are able to work in new neighborhoods, opening up new experiences.

“Members come and go, but Womanshare is always here for those who need us,” said Wilson. The group, she added, continues to meet one of the most important goals she set at the start: to see women grow in self-confidence, “to watch them flourish.” —Heather Purser

**Check out the YES! Magazine archive:** See our original story at [www.yesmagazine.org/womanshare](http://www.yesmagazine.org/womanshare). It's one of more than 3,500 searchable YES! Magazine articles in our archives.